THE STUMP FARM

HILDA ROSE

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THE STUMP FARM

A CHRONICLE OF PIONEERING

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Hilda Rose, 1919

THE STUMP FARM

A CHRONICLE OF PIONEERING

By

HILDA ROSE

With a Foreword by

SAMUEL A. ELIOT, D.D., LL.D.

ILLUSTRATED

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

How the story of Mrs. Rose came to be recorded in several numbers of the *Atlantic Monthly*, her letters themselves will make clear. But the publishers wish to express their sense of obligation to two devoted friends of Mrs. Rose — to Mrs. Florence Fisk White, through whose initiative the letters first made their appearance in the *Altantic*, and whose generous interest and valuable suggestions have greatly helped in the preparation of this volume; and to Dr. Mary F. Hobart, from whom many letters of Mrs. Rose have been received, and who has likewise been unsparing in friendly services. To the letters published in the *Atlantic Monthly* have been added others received from Mrs. Rose herself or from friends and correspondents who have lent them to complete and enrich this book.

The illustrations in the volume are from snapshots. Those of the New Homestead in Alberta come from a kodak and films which were sent to Mrs. Rose in September 1927, from the *Atlantic* office.

FOREWORD

"THE conditions under which heroic literature can be produced have long passed away from the world."

So said a diligent but rather unobservant scholar, but there is no indication in these letters that we have reached an age of lotus-eating or that American life has grown soft and luxurious and prosaic. Rather, here is the testimony that the pioneer virtues are not deteriorating and that they can still flower into words that thrill responsive hearts.

The genial doctrine that men can reach their highest good along the lines of least resistance may commend itself to indolent natures, but the practice of that doctrine would defraud us of the disciplines that make life worth living. Give us a life which requires no strenuous effort and in which danger and suffering play no part and we shall be deprived of resourcefulness, thrift, valor, and fortitude.

These letters do not describe a summer's ramble through green pastures and by still

waters. With unconscious power they tell the story of the conflict of a frail woman with the forces of nature — with obstinate stumps and refractory soils and burning droughts and icy winds and blockading snows. There is nothing dainty about such an experience, but there is in it a never-say-die spirit and an indomitable pluck which give the reader a choking sensation in the throat. For, in spite of the hardships and anxieties and drudgeries, love and loyalty brighten all the difficulties of the way. Here is the grand old story of unassuming self-denial and dauntless persistence in the face of appalling conditions. Here is an insight clarified rather than dimmed by hard manual toil, a sympathy broadened rather than extinguished by solitude, a spiritual craving refined rather than coarsened by primitive surroundings and rigorous disciplines. Here is another proof of the underlying romance and inspiration that can be found in the lives of the "Forgotten Millions."

There is a kind of courage which comes out of physical excitement or out of anger or obstinacy, which is reckless of danger and comparatively insensitive to pain. That is good in its place. But there is a higher courage which keenly feels the pangs of loneliness and worry, which is

very sensitive to the pains of body and mind, which foresees the inevitable perils, and yet is steadfast. Physical courage is good, but spiritual courage makes even more potent appeal. These letters make that kind of an appeal to our minds and hearts and we want first to send a ringing "Good cheer" to the plucky writer up in the northern wilderness, and then to make our grateful acknowledgments to those whose radiant good will penetrated to the remote stump farm and elicited these letters, addressed at first to strangers in California and New England, and then, with growing confidence and affection, to true-hearted friends and comrades in the Spirit.

SAMUEL A. ELIOT

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
December 22, 1927

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PART ONE

The Stump Farm

January 17, 1918

It 's thirteen years since I taught school, and I have gone through a great deal since then. Lost my health, came West, and married a man twenty-eight years older than myself. I worship the very ground he walks on, and while we have to work hard, we 're happy to have each other.

We live on a ranch, or what will be one when we get the stumps out. We are far from markets and have n't anything to sell, anyway, but have plenty to eat. I 've never been very strong, weigh eighty-six pounds, but am real active and get quite a lot done in a day. And there 's heaps to do where there are three children. We took two little city orphans to bring up. I teach them at home and send them to school once a year to be examined. We live on a ledge or bench that hugs up against the mountain range, and we call it the Rim Rock locally.

I forgot to tell you about the baby. He came after years of waiting. A great big boy, sturdy and strong. Named Karl.

February 20, 1919

I prayed for a baby and when he was on the way even the old doctor did n't think I 'd live. The last three months I could n't walk. It was in the winter (the baby came in April), and Daddy and Ruth put me on a hand sled and pulled me around a few minutes a couple of times in January. That was the only enjoyment all winter. Nothing to read, and I could not sew, as I had n't the strength. I had nothing ready for the baby and I was worried. Daddy was expecting to get money from some wood he 'd sold, but it did n't come till three weeks before the baby came. There I was, eight miles from the doctor, bad roads, and Ruth, and "Daddy."

Surely Ruth's dead mother sent her to us as the only place where a girl whom five other homes had given up as a hopeless case could learn gentleness. She was so bad, I want to forget. But her love for us is wonderful now. A powerful mind directed to being bad — no wonder those others gave her up. She was a terror. She had never been in the country before, and outdoor life was what she needed, too. And then to see Daddy, old and gray and always so courteous to both of us. Always

giving "Mother" (that 's me) the best of everything, toasting bread on his knees before the open stove door, to coax me to eat my breakfast. It was a revelation to Ruth.

Then, when the baby came, a neighbor's wild ride at midnight for the doctor, who came as far as he could in his auto and then was met by a team. It took three hours and he almost came too late. And then for five weeks "Mother" nearly left them; only the blue eyes of the baby pulled her spirit back to earth. I wanted him so that I could n't go. It took me six months to learn to walk alone, and Ruth let me lean on her and led me around so lovingly.

So last summer I sent for her little sister. I can't give them much and they share the household duties with me, as I could never do the extra work alone; but they will learn what love is and will some day have happier homes than if they had been brought up in an orphans' home. I don't know why I took them exactly. We like children and it was dreadfully lonesome.

April 25, 1919

I certainly enjoyed your letter, especially where you told about seeing Chicago. Dear old town, scarce a day passes but I think of it. I

have never seen a motor-bus, but your description of it was very good and I can see you sitting on top, tooting a horn; or don't they do those things now when they go joy-riding? I am so backwoodsy now, but imagine the pleasures in store when I go back to civilization, as I hope to do some day. A better, wiser, stronger woman than when I left it. The books and papers help me so. I am learning the poetry and a book is always propped up on the table where I work. I am having a mental bath, washing away the bitterness and lonesomeness. I feel so happy all day long now.

Spring is here and all the birds have come back. How dearly I love their singing! And I am planting my garden and that is interesting, especially to the children. Even baby is digging away with an old stick, as if a great deal depended on him, too.

June 21, 1919

We are friends now, so we won't stand on ceremony. At last! At last! I am going to have friends who will be glad to see me when I go back to the world for a visit or to stay. Time will tell, but I presume that it will be when I am old and gray.

I can see one farmhouse from here, but it 's about a mile off and the inmates are impossible. The nearest "shack," about as big as a hen-house, on the east, is inhabited by a crippled grandmother and her son. I tramp through the woods to see her once in a while. She is very poor and ignorant, but I like her, and she treats me like an equal.

On the west I am bounded by the woods, and also on the north. So there is n't much to see, as we live in a depression, or small valley, on this shelf or bench. I can't go anywhere very often, though I do get out for at least one picnic every summer, given by the Farmers' Union. I belong to it, but I have to go alone, as Daddy is so old he does n't like to go anywhere any more. So whenever I can, I take the boy and go. But it 's the winters that are trying. That is why I had to have something to read, or go crazy.

You don't know how anxiously I look in the glass as the years go by, and wonder if I 'll ever get to look like the rest of the natives here. You have seen overworked farmers' wives, with weather-wrung and sorrow-beaten faces, drooping mouths, and a sad look.

I want to go back, I don't care where, and

have friends once more. I must not look like that — No! No! I want to be elected president of a club, and go to socials, and I want to eat ice cream. I also would love to live for a few years in a college town. Would n't that be grand? And then I 'd teach kindergarten a few years, and join a card club. But the truth of the matter is that I 'll probably spend the rest of my life right here. But dreams don't hurt — nor do air castles, and maybe they 'll come true.

For the third year we are having a drought. Each year has been a little dryer, until this summer, and I don't believe we 'll get any hay at all. Daddy and I thought we were getting along well until the dry years came. Then we sold the old cow and bought feed for the calves. Last summer they went, all but a few head, to buy feed for the team and food for us, and we got into debt besides. I could n't stand it. Daddy was nearly beside himself with worry, so I wrote to the *Tribune* for reading matter. All winter I have read aloud to Daddy and helped him to forget. We went through a siege of the flu also this winter, so our dear Daddy is practically an invalid. He may get stronger after a while. Ruth and I do the chores, which are not many. What we are going to live

on this winter I don't know. Something may turn up. We may get a rain before it is too late.

By religion I don't know what I am. I never could decide. Daddy says I 'm an atheist, but I hope not. Sometimes I doubt if there is a God. He seems so terribly cruel to his children. And what is he and where? My brother says I am an agnostic. They don't believe anything, you know.

August 17, 1919

We have had a very trying summer with drought and fires all around. There was no rain for fourteen weeks and the oats did n't even germinate for us. The potatoes, being planted deep, came up and are still green on account of frequent hoeings. The long drought was broken on the fourth day of August, when we had a gentle drizzle for several hours. How wonderful it was! Daddy went out and took off his hat and let it fall on his old gray head, and then he turned his face up and let it get wet while he smiled at the falling drops. Now the oats are coming up, and while it 's too late for it to mature, it will make fall pasture for the cow.

The fires have been dreadful. One day a

few weeks ago I saw smoke about a mile south of us and my heart sank, as I realized only too well what it was. Daddy is so weak I knew he could n't do anything and it 's hard for him to sit still in the face of danger and not be able to do anything. The fire came on until it was a solid wall of it. There was no wind, but the fire made its own draft as it swept along and sounded like a strong wind blowing with cracks like pistol shots as trees broke and fell into the furnace of fire. Daddy hobbled out to it, but all alone could do nothing, and so we stood in the back yard, the children and I, and watched it burn. We felt safe, as there is a ploughed field all around the house. It took all my good dry winter wood, and then turned and went east and lit the sky red for weeks. The sun could n't shine for the smoke, nor the moon, and my eyeballs burned all day. The rain gave us a respite, but it has started up again and, unless rain comes, will get worse than ever. We are menaced on the north and west, but not very serious as yet.

I cannot tell you how much I appreciated the box of clothes for Ruth. I have n't been able to give her anything as nice as the clothes in the box, so it was a wonderful gift for her. She will

be in the seventh grade this coming year and I am going to send her to school this year. She needs to get out and meet other children. Then I 'll try to find her a home where she can earn her board as a mother's helper and go to high school.

December 12, 1919

I imagine you are in a garden, and roses are in bloom, with calla lilies as tall as a man. That is California, I am told, even in winter. It is nice to dream about it, and forget for a while that the thermometer is thirty below, and it seems next to impossible to get my feet warm even when I put them on a piece of wood in an open oven.

I undress the children and then I dress them for the night. I have plenty of comforts, but still they 'd be like ice in the morning if I did n't dress them up warm. I put one of Daddy's old patched shirts on the baby, then an old pink faded eider-down dressing sacque of mine, then a crib blanket over his shoulders for a shawl, and then he is wrapped up in an old wool shawl that belonged to his dead grandmother.

I expected cold weather, though not so early. The drops of water I spill on the floor freeze at

once. Why, my milk freezes on the table with the hot stove going. But this bad cold spell will let up soon, I think. It seems unusually long, though.

The drought was broken after fourteen weeks, but it was so late that we did n't even get a spear of hay, and had to buy straw. That is poor stuff to make milk on, and I am quite short, having butter to use only one day a week. And the horse is very poor indeed. My riding pony, who is used to good feed and is getting old, will hardly survive the winter, though Daddy is doing his best by giving her the chaff.

I never thought that I would go through the horrors of a drought, but this is the third year now. Last year I helped Daddy take the straw that had bleached for ten years on an old log hen house, put there to keep it warm, and we fed it to the starving horses. I lay on my knees many times in the empty hay barn, after scraping the ground carefully for one more forkful of blackened old chaff to give the poor animals, and I prayed as I have never prayed before, as I looked up at the stars that shone through the roof where the shakes were gone. They looked down on me so cold and pitiless that at last I could n't see them for tears and

I went back to the house, washed my eyes, and tried to smile, for Daddy had the flu, and Ruth and Boy were just getting over it. Daddy would get up and try to work, and then get sick again. He 's only sixty-six, but already broken in health, and is n't well yet. I have straw enough this winter, but it 's not paid for, and I don't know how it will end.

Another drought and we leave in a wagon, if there are any horses to pull it. Very likely we 'll go on foot. Where to? Daddy says Alberta, Canada, to take up a homestead. I can just see him, feeble and gray, with a frail wife and infant son and two orphans, starting life anew on the frontier.

Don't worry about us this winter. I have beans and five sacks of potatoes, and lots of berries canned up. You see, when the cupboard was getting bare last summer, I slipped away and picked berries on an irrigated ranch, and took my pay in vegetables and berries. I 'm not very big, and I have to jump around quite lively with my big family so sort of helpless on my hands. Sometimes I 'm too tired to sleep.

Am I an atheist? Well, I don't know. I believe I would be happier if I felt nothing, feared nothing, hoped nothing, and believed

nothing. Life is breaking me on its wheel because I have wanted so much of life.

Spring, 1921

Thanks for the package. Daddy and I are enjoying the literature immensely. And the children will love the "pretties" you picked up for them.

Since my last letter to you girls I have had my parents come to live with us. I went down on the prairie and borrowed a cow for her milk. She gives about six quarts a day, and that is luxury for us.

Potatoes are plentiful, and there is no sale for them. They sell for twenty-five cents a hundred pounds, and last year I had to pay ten dollars a hundred for them. If there is no change in conditions the farmers will be sold out, as nearly everybody is in debt up to their ears out here too. I 'm in debt for seed and taxes for last year and there will be seed and taxes for this year added to that. Then if we don't get a crop you can send for the undertaker.

But if Daddy can stay well and work, — he 's a dreadfully hard worker for his age, — and if we get hay, and if we get that pig fat enough to butcher, and if we have good luck with the

cows so we get lots of milk, and if our vegetables grow, we 'll have enough to eat anyway next winter. Daddy wants to hew out some ties for the railroad and I wrote to three roads, but they all say they are not buying any, but maybe they will later on.

I have a lovely flower garden. There are three rose bushes, a peony (red), some jonquils, a bleeding heart, a pink tulip, some flags, London pride, a lemon lily, Shasta daisy, sweet Mary, sweet William, southernwood, pansies, a lilac, and a bush honeysuckle. Only the jonquils are in bloom yet. I take much comfort from my flowers. We have a square bed 20 × 20, and it 's only pretty until August 1. After that it is a brown, dusty, dry patch, but it always revives with new green every spring. I spend lots of time on it; odd moments when my soul is weary.

It has taken me years to collect these flowers, a root here and a slip here, and each has a story of its own. A robin is building a nest in a bush, a wren has rented a coffee can I nailed to the house. I made a hole in the cover. A pair of martins (bless their hearts) rented a flat I made of an old cigar box by putting a roof on it and nailing it to the house too.

So I have lots of bird neighbors. The bluebirds are occupying their old house on a post, and the swallows have already new babies in their clay houses under the eaves.

July, 1921

At last I have found time to write to you in answer to your many beautiful letters to me. I have read the three religious papers and was surprised to find them interesting and worth keeping, too, to read over again next winter when I 'm snow-bound. Another little paper that comes regularly is the *Cheerful Letter*, and it 's fine. The *Good Housekeeping Magazine* came, and it was such a treat. I 've read it even to the ads.

The nomad life you speak of in your letter would suit me, but with the bunch of invalids, or what you call semi-invalids, that I have to take care of it is impossible. My father (76) and mother (74) and Daddy (68) are too old to travel, and I dare not take the risk of moving anywhere just now. Father is partially paralyzed, but not in his legs, so he can walk yet, and Mother is too feeble to be up all day, so she lies down after each meal for a while. And Daddy is so tired he goes to sleep if he sits down any-

where, so you have a picture of my three old darlings, and can readily see that as long as I have a roof over their heads I have to stay there.

You think I still believe in God, but I don't. Three winters ago I gave him up. It was on a cold winter night, and Daddy was in bed with pneumonia. This was in February. I left Ruth to watch him while I went out to feed the stock. I gave the horse some straw that I got on the floor of an old log henhouse. There was no hay, no straw, and the poor cows got nothing. I knelt on the dirt floor of the old barn. The roof was old and broken and the stars looked at me, bright and cold, and I prayed for help. I begged and prayed and cried until I was cold. There is no God. That was the beginning of the end. Twelve head of cattle died and the rest were all but dead when spring came.

The earth is beautiful and life could be so pleasant if it were not for the terrible struggle for existence.

Two weeks later. — I could almost believe in God. I wish you could have seen Daddy out in the rain doing up his chores this evening. With his white beard flying in the wind, and his old white dog, he reminded me of old Rip Van Winkle. Are we happy? Did you ever go

through a drought on a farm? If you have, then you 'll appreciate rain. So we 're all happy, too happy. Yesterday we were blue and worried. Daddy looked so tired, and I knew he was worried, and he helped me to water some of the vegetables. I was so tired I could n't sit up to write you even a line and I 'm glad I did n't, I was so blue. I set out four dozen cabbage plants a week ago, and carried each of them a pail of water. It was so dry and dusty, and the hens got in one day and ate up all but four of them. Well, I finished replacing them yesterday, some way, and carried water to them until I was too tired to talk.

Since the rain came there is sure to be a crop this year and I can't tell you how good it seems. It is July now, and I have onions and lettuce on the table every day, and green peas will be on in a week. My garden is small, but ample for our needs when it grows.

And what do you do in California all summer long? Do you read and tatt and go to the movies? What a life! Or do you do things and keep moving? I can't sit still. I love to work, but this God-forsaken country gets me discouraged.

Just now it is a little taste of heaven. I heard

Mr. Rose in 1912

a lecture at our little schoolhouse last Sunday entitled, "Millions now living will never die." It said the Millennium would start in 1930. Have you heard about it?

December 27, 1922

I think of you often, and of your kindness to a little unknown mortal up here in the hills. The "thing" that I feared has got me. I 'm afraid. I wanted to keep up with the world outside, wanted still to have ambitions and dream of better things; but the never-ending struggle for existence and the lonesomeness are telling on me, and I feel so old, so drab, and so hopeless. I quit writing, and yours was the only Christmas card I have received. The girls, N. and her friends, must think I 'm terrible and ungrateful, but I 'm not ungrateful, just too tired of life and living to write.

Daddy is more and more feeble, so I have more to do than before; getting wood and water is hardest, and I must do the milking too very soon. I planted and raised a good garden, and potatoes too; dug them and put them in the cellar myself, about one hundred bushels; but they are not worth ten cents to sell, so I am feeding them to the cows and the hens. I sold

all the old hens in June, and bought a good hand pump and pumped water on my garden from a spring, so this year I have the cellar full of vegetables, thank God. Daddy has been going to make a pump for years, but I saw plainly that I must take the helm and work.

Ruth, poor child, died in April, at the Home. Then, as if I did n't have enough to bear, the father who deserted the two children about eight years ago appears, and takes the other one away, and disappears into the big wide world. So once more I am alone with Daddy and Boy.

Daddy talks every day of his birthplace in Canada. He wants to die on Canadian soil among the Indians. It does n't matter to me where I go, or when I die, and I have told him I 'll go to the end of the world with him whenever he wants to pull out. I would do anything to make him happy, my sage and poet; and if a tepee will do it, he shall have it in the land of his birth. So some day you may get a letter from a village up North among the "Yellow Knives" or some similar hair-raising name. Perhaps I 'll start a kindergarten for fat brown babies.

I took Boy and went to the Christmas tree at the little schoolhouse up here in the woods.

Boy spoke "Little Jack Horner" for them. The first thing he did was to bow till his head almost touched the floor and then throw back his head and laugh gleefully. Then his voice rang out loud with the four lines of the rhyme, and the lumberjacks nearly raised the roof with their noise. It was Boy's first appearance, and he won all hearts, he was so dear.

I was snowed in for about seven weeks; it was only about five feet on the level, but it drifted terribly. A horse could n't go through at all. Then two days before Xmas it changed suddenly from ten below zero to forty above, and started to rain, something very unusual, and it is still raining. I hope it continues, so the snow will sink down to something reasonable.

Daddy's only sister came to see us this summer, a very prim old lady who is determined to have Boy. This is the second visit for this purpose since Boy came to us, and I can't give him up. Boy is getting braver than he was, and in time his fear of the woods and the creatures that inhabit them will wear away, I think. I speak of the "good wolves" and "good cougars" and "pretty deer" and weave

his bedtime stories about how they feed their babies, and so forth. He did n't seem a bit shocked when a man told us that a large cougar had crossed our place a week ago following a deer. A year ago it would have terrified him so he could n't go to sleep.

December 28. — I just heard from a man who went by that a Rural Delivery is almost certain to go through the coming year. Won't it be wonderful to see every day? And to run out to see if there is a letter in the box! When I was snowed in I did n't see a soul except a neighbor woman in a small shack near by. I wallowed over there every week to see if she was all right, as she was alone with two babies under two. Her man is a lumberjack, and got stalled forty miles north. He just got back.

January 24, 1923

You surely have accomplished what I thought was impossible. I had given up hope of ever feeling real cheered up again. Life is so hard on a stump ranch when things go wrong. How lovely those violets must have been when they were picked! They still retain a little fragrance. They reminded me that summer would come again if I only have patience.

Boy goes out to play with his sled every day now. It is hard to keep a lively child in the house all day, but I have to when it 's from ten to twenty degrees below.

His aunt lives in New Haven, Connecticut, so it is quite a trip for her. I 'll never give the boy up as long as I can work for him. She offers him a college education if I give him up. I tell him he must work his way through college, and perhaps, now that hope springs again in my heart, I may get to be a writer and help him.

I was not joking about going to the ends of the earth. That is, the civilized part of it. It 's a grim reality that is steadily coming closer.

You know that one's childhood is a happy state of mind. Nothing you eat now tastes half as good as the same things in childhood, nor is anything half as nice as the place where you were born.

That 's how it is with Daddy. He is seventy, getting older every day and a little slower, and just a little dearer to me as he depends more on me. He got what you call second sight this year, and reads without glasses now. But he does n't live here any more. His body is here, but his mind is in Canada, where he was born.

Land in Quebec is sky-high, so we must go far to get a free homestead, you see. Maybe we 'll never get there. He has talked about it for the last four years. If we go it does n't matter, for it can't be harder than here.

I can't teach school and take care of Daddy too. So I thought I would get some traps and try for some furs up there; live like an Indian; shoot and fish and trap. Boy will soon be quite a lad and able to help me. His education won't be neglected, for one of my greatest pleasures is teaching him. I have a map of the world pinned up on the wall, and he is learning geography from it. I have Gray's *Anatomy*, and he just loves it. That is his best picture book. At the table when I have cooked a hen he gravely tells Daddy to give him the femur or the radius and ulna. The old white dog is lazy and won't play with him, but a stray pup about ten months old came Christmas week. Boy is sure Santa Claus sent him, and they have great romps together. I named the dog "Bonny Lad," but Boy shortened it to "Barney." So Barney is his name now. He is a beautiful black shepherd dog with a wonderfully kind disposition, and I had n't the heart to turn him away after Boy welcomed him so joyfully.

March 22, 1923

I have been ill, and it is hard for me to write, but I must thank you for the reading matter which you so kindly sent. I can't tell you how much I appreciated it. First I had flu and then quinsy. I am writing this down on the prairie. At home I could n't write. I had no peace. Daddy is poorly, and I 'd drag out and milk and feed up, and I 'd get so tired I was all in. I 've run away to-day and left it. The cow won't be milked or fed, poor thing, till to-morrow. The roads are so bad I can't get back the same day. It is six weeks since I have had any mail, six long weeks, and we had the worst blizzard in forty years in this six weeks. For three weeks we could n't get to the barn. It drifted as high as the second story of the house. The north and south roads are muddy and heaving; the east and west roads I could hardly get through, as the drifts are piled up so sidling. I slid and tumbled once in a while, but managed to arrive at last.

March 23. — After a good sleep I feel more like tackling the road back than yesterday. Last Saturday we — that is, a dozen women who live in the woods around me and on the slopes of the mountains — gathered at the

schoolhouse. I wrote the posters and sent them out to be tacked on trees on trails that I thought would catch some eyes. For the first time we have a teacher with a vision. Why could n't we have had one before? She is forty-five, I guess, and born in Ireland, which accounts for it. She called on me and we warmed up to each other and she said, "Let 's start something." "Call a meeting of the mothers and I 'll come and talk to them," I said. She did, and we organized a club, and they made me the Queen Bee, as none of the others had ever belonged to a club. We decided on a box social to raise some money. In a poverty-stricken community a few dollars can do much when there are births and deaths or forest fires wipe out a homestead. So Saturday we had our box social. We each brought a box with food in it. We made coffee. I brought cream, as my cow is fresh, and the teacher brought coffee. One woman brought bread, another meat, and so forth. The lumberjacks poured in till the little room was crowded (even the standing room) and you could n't get in. The programme was just stunts. The teacher played the organ, and anybody in the audience who could sing a solo came up and did his best. Some of the men had good, though untrained

voices. Everybody brought a lantern, so we had plenty of light.

The teacher sang "The Wearing of the Green" till our hearts were breaking, and the men stamped and whistled till she had to do it all over again. One fellow did handsprings and one played an accordion with his back to the audience, he was so nervous, but he played "Marching through Georgia" real well. It was not a critical audience.

The programme lasted three hours and then the boxes were auctioned off. The auctioneer would hold up a box trimmed up with a bit of colored paper. I cut clover leaves and pasted them all over mine. And he 'd say, "Only a dollar for this box! Why, jut see the purdies on it!" And somebody would offer a little more and get it. Those that did n't get boxes could buy a plate with a sandwich, a piece of cake, and coffee for twenty-five cents. We took in $28.75 and I thought that was pretty good. You 'll wonder why I did it. Just one instance. In a shack a few years ago a dainty, well-educated woman gave birth to twins. They had had bad luck, there was no doctor, there were three other little ones, and the neighbor woman who stepped in had to wrap the

babies in a dish towel. One died. I 'm sick of seeing it and doing nothing. These I. W. W.'s who work in the camps are hungry for a good time and won't miss a dollar or two. We are going to repeat it later in the spring maybe.

I must close now, and walk back again. Daddy and I enjoyed the magazines, all of them, but the *Atlantic* the most.

October 11, 1923

I am sorry to have delayed so long answering and thanking you for the good reading you sent, but I have to work all the time. It 's work, work, until I feel as if I had only a body and the soul is gone. Then night is the happiest, when I can lose consciousness for a short time. To-day I cut cornstalks for fodder. They are very short, but there is an acre of them, and I 'm glad I had them to cut. Winter is almost upon us. I am worried about the prunes. They are so nice this year, and a black freeze is liable to come any time. Shall or shall I not get them picked in time? I picked one pailful to-day, but will devote every spare minute to them from now on. We have never seen a year like this since we came here. It has rained and rained. I have never seen such prunes be-

fore and I 'm almost sick with fear I won't get them in on time. Winter will be here any day, and I still have some carrots and potatoes out.

October 28. — Since writing the above I have dried ten bushels of pears, slicing them by hand and drying them around the stove. I did a bushel a day. Then I picked ten bushels of prunes. They are safe now, and now my work begins on them. This is the third time in twelve years I have had prunes ripen. Usually they freeze.

November 10. — The prunes are well under way. Two more weeks will finish them. Boy and Daddy are both sick with the whooping cough. The ground is frozen a little, not deep yet. I keep digging away at the potatoes, and get a sack most every day. I have fifteen sacks in the cellar now, and I went over to T.'s and picked apples and have ten sacks in the cellar. Culls, but good eating.

One night I worked four hours on Daddy, putting compresses on his chest until he could breathe properly. Twice I have smoked both my invalids so they could get a little rest.

Monday. — Boy is still in bed. He has bronchial pneumonia now, and Daddy is worse. I am more afraid for Daddy than for Boy. I

was up nearly all night, but got a little rest in the morning. It would be a comfort to have a doctor, but that is impossible with six months of winter ahead. Queer that doctors are prohibited to the poor. Out here the women get their babies without them, just their husbands doing for them. I have several sad stories laid away in my brain about them, and now I am in the same class. I must struggle on. I have no woman to talk to, so I will write to ease my brain.

Conditions are very hard. The struggle for bare existence is awful, but one gets used to it. Every penny should be used for at least a dozen such urgent needs that I have carried a dollar with me for days, laid it in front of me when I ate, debating what it should go for. Time passes, we live on, and get through somehow. If I accept money it burns me, it seems to lower me somehow. I will never accept any of it any more, for now I see I can never pay any back. This is my diary. It is true. The brain forgets, so I will write down each day.

November 17, 1923

Boy is better and sitting up in bed. Daddy's cough is worse. I cleaned part of the henhouse

Mrs. Rose During Stump-Farm Days

yesterday. It is very dreadful, and the dust is annoying and makes me feel sick, but I 'll finish it to-day. It 's a big henhouse, 24 × 16, and has a loft where I keep my small late chicks that the hens are mean to.

December 21. — Boy is almost done whooping, and two more weeks will see him well. Daddy is better too. There are still six sacks of potatoes in the ground, and I have given them up. I dressed up in my best dress and wrapped up warm and sat down on the fence to-night for an hour in the moonlight, hoping that someone would go by that was going to the Xmas entertainment at the schoolhouse. The teacher was going to have a tree. I did n't dare go alone, as I am afraid at night. Nobody came, so I went in, and Daddy sang some old Scotch folk songs, and Boy and I were happy again.

December 23. — It is snowing. So old Winter has come in earnest. I am going down on the prairie to-morrow to get the mail, and mail some letters. My calves are home and look nice. They have been on the range all this time, and just came home this week. I tried to sell four of them, and sent word to seven butcher shops, but they have quit buying of ranchers, and I will have to peddle to the camps

that are logging in the mountains. Dressed veal is eight cents a pound, and I may get enough to pay the taxes. I have counted so much on them, and am so disappointed, as my taxes are a year and a half behind already. Eggs are thirty-five cents and my hens barely pay their feed bill. Boy is trimming a tree for me. He is busy cutting paper, and I have sent for a box of tiny candles that should be in the mail. I have a ball, a tin horn, and some peanuts for his stocking, so he 'll have lots of fun Xmas morning. Dear old Daddy is stargazing again. He watches the stars and wonders about them, why and wherefore they are.

December 26. — Seven yearlings, a few almost two years old, are missing. Where can they be? It has turned so cold, and it is snowing from the north. How I hate winter! I have just pulled in some fence rails into the kitchen, and when I get rested I 'll saw them up for wood. The wind is rising again, so it will be a penetrating cold to-night. I don't keep a fire at night, as I can't saw the wood fast enough, but we are very comfortable, even when it is twenty degrees below in the house and a drop of water freezes instantly.

January 7. — Daddy and I and Boy drove

ten miles east into the heart of the ridge of mountains. We went up a gulch, but we were halfway up the side of the mountain on a trail cut by the Forest Reserve men. A blizzard came up behind us, so it got pretty fierce, but we had to go on. Daddy drove the old horse, and we sat on some boards nailed on the front bob of his old bobsled. You could n't take a whole sled in there on the sharp turns on a trail cut barely wide enough to get through. We got word on Sunday that the yearlings were at a logging camp on the Reserve. One of the loggers came down and told us they had been there about two months. It was after dinner when we arrived in camp, but the cook fed us well, and stuffed our pockets with real dandy cookies as big as saucers when we left. The men had been good to the stock and had thrown out feed for them, so they looked good. For shelter they were allowed to sleep in the blacksmith shop, and the men all liked them, for it 's lonesome up there.

We started for home, and I drove, and Daddy and Boy walked behind the yearlings, who followed me. I had to go so slow and faced a blizzard all the way. The horses had to pick their own way, as I could n't see. Boy thought

his eyes were frozen, but it was only snow on his eyelashes. It was after dark when we got home. I can't tell in words how glad I was to get home. I pulled off Boy's and Daddy's coats and got them into bed, and made a fire, and went to bed myself until it got warm. It 's the only thing to do when you are chilled through. Then I warmed up some soup and waked Daddy and we ate a hot dinner by the stove, using the sewing-machine drop leaf for our table. It was no use to try to thaw the kitchen out — it was too cold. When it storms I read aloud to Daddy, and the papers you sent last year I am reading over again, and find much in them worth reading over.

April 14, 1924

I am down on the prairie for two nights. I walk back Wednesday night. You see, the University Extension Department of Montana sent teachers into the country to teach various things, and I wanted so much to go, I 've planned for weeks on how to manage so I could get away. Not so much to learn, although I 'll be glad to learn anything, as to meet the teachers and see and talk to a bunch of women once more, for it almost drives me wild to be alone, and it

storms so much of the time we only see the sun a few times all winter.

I baked bread and cooked beans and put a pail of potatoes beside the stove real handy for Daddy to bake in the oven, and did all I could to make it easy for him, and took Boy with me so nothing should bother him.

To-night is Monday night, and while I 'm a bit tired, having walked seven miles, still I 'm so uplifted in spirit that I can't go to bed and sleep. The teachers are wonderful, college girls, and have been out of college and at this work for about five years. They talked and demonstrated hats to-day, and we were all taught frame making. Eighteen women came. To-morrow we cover the hats, and Wednesday we trim. I have n't bought a hat for years, and one of N.'s friends sent me a bunch of old, old hats that had lain for twenty years or more in her closets. "Lids," the University women call them. I ripped the braid off, and have material. For trimming they will show us how to make flowers and rosettes of the material itself also. That wonderful cape — it 's an open sesame wherever I go. I wore it in M—— and the clerk where I sold my eggs opened the door for me when I left. Such deference to a

woman from the backwoods! The University ladies planned my hat to match it, and it 's going to be very pretty. The crown is brown horsehair braid, which is so sheer my hair shows through. The brim is tiny and faced with bright blue silk. It will have flowers of the silk. My eyes are blue and my hair is pale gold. They thought it a wonderful combination. Forgive me if I talk so much about myself; one does n't enter paradise very often.

Up there in the woods where I live (I am on the prairie now) most of the women are very crude and coarse. Against Daddy's wishes (he is an old darling, and thinks I ought to keep away from those women and just be on speaking terms with them) I and the school-teacher called a meeting at the schoolhouse a year ago to see what we could do to alleviate some of the worst cases of distress that came to my ears from time to time. About two dozen women came, and we organized a "Helping Hand." To get money we had a stunt night at the schoolhouse, and I made posters and put them up where the lumberjacks and miners could see them. The programme of stunts was most remarkable. It lasted for hours, and then we sold boxes of lunch and made coffee. We took

in twenty-nine dollars. We bought a spring and mattress for the dearest old grandma I 've ever run across. She is over eighty and was in bed for fifteen weeks without being able to sit up, and lying on the dirtiest straw tick on boards. They met with me, and we dyed flour sacks and pieced two of the brightest comforts I 've ever seen. We each pieced seven blocks at home, and used the flour sacks for in between and linings. Grandma was so pleased with them; she said they would pass the time away for her, they were so pretty. Maybe I 've told you this before, and how when she was younger she helped over one hundred babies to come into the world before any doctor lived close enough to this district. She came to this country over the Oregon trail in an oxcart when she was seven. Her mother and father both died on the trail here. Many the hardships she passed through. I 'm glad she has a decent spring and mattress under her to-night.

We next met at her shack and cleaned it. I can't tell you all the things this little band of women have done. We are making a layette for a poor woman who has six half-starved young ones. She expects another one next week. Her children are all mentally deficient, but such

people breed like rabbits, and babies are so helpless I can't bear to see them abused.

I worry over my debts and twenty-five dollars I borrowed one spring for seed, and have n't been able to pay back yet. I counted on selling my calves when they got big. But I was n't able to find a purchaser. Times are so hard there is no sale for anything in this Western country. There is an embargo on cattle west of the Rockies and cattle don't sell. I have n't paid the taxes for two years now, and this year's are due this fall again. I hope for better luck this summer. No, I cannot take a crippled old man, sick half the time, to California, or anywhere else. He has to stay here until he dies. He can't live anywhere else. You know they get crotchety as they grow old.

Boy is a great help and comfort, so I shall tell you about Boy. He has always been a remarkable child, odd, yet fine and strong. Just as soon as he gets among other children you notice how different he is. He sings to himself, and two years ago a sister of Daddy was out for a visit and tried to listen to hear what he was singing about. But he was too bashful. I never paid any attention to it, but after she had gone I got a pencil and paper and wrote down

his songs. I have n't them here, so I 'll write more about them after I get home.

The verse in the Bible about "Knock and it shall be opened" seems to have a special message for me. For you see Boy and I are planning to go to college after Daddy is gone. I have always wanted to go, and that wanting is increasing every day. So some day a little old, old lady and a young lad will knock at some college door. Will they open for us? The message in the Bible says they will. It does n't say we have to have money, but just knock.

April 20. — Time passes so quickly when you have more than you can do. Since that dreadful day we went after the yearlings I 've had to be legs for Daddy all I can. He froze one toe and the varicose veins broke soon after, and he has a dreadful leg.

I am going to write to the University and see if they won't come and help the women up here in the hills. It would be such a treat for them.

December 20, 1924

We are right in the middle of a cold snap. I expect it to moderate in a week or so. We had an early winter this year. It was thirty degrees below zero two nights ago, and now it is twenty-

five degrees below zero. It would n't have been so bad if the wind had n't blown so hard. I never saw a stronger wind. It uprooted many trees. I could hear the crashing, and the snow, real fine, sifted into the house everywhere. If I spill a drop of water on the kitchen floor, it freezes instantly. The Woman's Club I started up here had three days' instruction from the University Extension. They enjoyed it so much. Now there won't be any more until spring.

In spite of the drought, we got a big load of ripe wheat hay off of five acres. This has been the driest year we 've had, but my little garden did well and I canned 125 quarts of green vegetables off it, besides the roots I grew for winter. Daddy put the hay in a shed, and then hitched up the old team and drove them round and round until it was threshed out. The horses were eating big mouthfuls of it, and I told Daddy he ought to tie up their noses. But he would n't, for it says in the Bible, "Muzzle not the ox that treads out thy grain." This Bible verse taught him how to do it also, for he had never seen or heard of threshing grain before in that way. Then we raked off the straw, and on a windy day we cleaned out the chaff by

pouring it from one pan to another. I grind it in an old coffee mill and cook bread out of the fine meal and gruel from the coarse. A scone baked in the iron spider, from sour milk and soda and this meal, is just fine. I bake one every day. The reason I use the spider is because it requires no greasing. But last month she began to stick and it was so provoking. Daddy joked about it and said the old frying pan got hungry. We were all hungry for fat, for the old cow dried up when the drought came. I get just a little bit of milk to cook with. Taxes had to be paid, so I helped Daddy butcher Blue Bell, a small cow, and then we drove to town and tried to sell her. The butchers all told us they were buying only of the packers, so we went home again. It was bitterly cold, the roads were bad, the horse slow, but I had two bricks (hot) at our feet and we got along fine. Now we are eating the cow and it is certainly grand to have both meat and fat to cook with again. Daddy feels so cheerful that he sings after meals. He can't carry a tune, but it 's nice to hear him sing. So far he has been well.

We have a new mail route. It starts on the sixteenth of July this summer, and my Woman's

Club up here is what did it. I am so proud of my club and the way they work together. We have twenty-two members now and some are foreigners. A few objected to the foreigners, but I told them these women needed to be Americanized, and that settled it. One of them, an Austrian, is beginning to eat with a fork, and that shows intelligence and desire to be like others. So we get to know each other better, have a community spirit, and grow more charitable toward each other.

I picked berries on the prairie, and apples in the fall. I broke a finger on my right hand and sprained the joint on it, too, by falling off a stepladder the first day I picked apples. I tied it up and went on working, because I had to. Winter coming on, there was no choice. It ached fierce and is tender yet and a little crooked, but I don't think it will bother me when it gets strong again. It 's next to the little finger and I spare it all I can.

March 25, 1925

The magazines you sent me were very interesting, especially as I am working on somewhat the same line with the women up here in the mountains. They are settlers on the cut-over

land, and homesteaders, and the land is sterile and frosty, but those that have men that are able to work get along fairly well, as there are logging and construction camps here and there and they can get work.

I started a club two years ago and have now twenty active members, and they are so active and full of life I find it hard to give them enough to do. I should like to join them up with some state organization of women's clubs. They have hard lives, but have big families, and it 's an education to these women to get together every other week and discuss welfare work and do things together. Having nothing else, the club is absorbing to them, and the way they tackle the work and obstacles in the way is certainly inspiring. We have started a debating society at our schoolhouse, which meets every other week. Sometimes we have a spelling match for a change, and sometimes just sing while the teacher plays the organ. It is a sparsely settled community and we have small one-room schoolhouses, so three school districts have to get together for any kind of entertainment. Our school is central, so we always meet there.

I have lived here now, on the prairie and up

here, nineteen years altogether, and I am behind the times in many ways. It was so good of you to send me such nice things. You can never realize what they mean to me, for I stay home from the prairie club many times because I 'm not presentable. If it 's a nice day, I 'm going to a meeting there to-morrow afternoon and wear the new voile dress you sent. It fits as if you had fitted it on me.

I am forty-five next October and I weigh eighty-six pounds, but I am well. Restricted by nature and circumstances to a simple and wholesome diet, I can't help but be well. Because I was so small, I resolved to raise a Better Baby, and my small son is as large now as any ten-year-old in this part of the country. I planned for a baby all my life, and I picked the best Daddy for him. My only regret is that he is so old now, but I am trying to take good care of him so Boy and I will have him with us many years yet. Daddy is a treasure. I don't know what life would be without him. He calls us his two children, and he 's never cross, no matter how tired or ill. He was seventy-two last month and has a white beard like Burroughs.

I can't raise many chickens because the coyotes are so bad. They seem to have increased

at a most alarming rate lately. Next winter I 'm going to have a line of traps for them. I shall work on the places to set them this summer. They are hard to trap, but I may be able to get enough skins to buy shoes and clothes for the boy. He is eight this spring and dreadfully hard on clothes.

It will soon be time to put in garden now. I plant about an acre altogether of garden stuff and potatoes. It 's all I can take care of myself, but Boy is getting big enough to help me now and I have rented an acre of irrigated land on the prairie — very rich land which I will put into mangels and beets for the cow. I get two thirds of the crop, but I have to weed and water it. I see I have to have something besides straw for the cow, in order to make milk. Sometimes Daddy is able to work, and sometimes not; so I have learned to go ahead, and if Daddy feels able to help I 'm very thankful, but I never count on it. I think he feels better this spring than for several years, as he had a good winter; the way he puts it, "I wintered good." Mostly due, I believe, to the fact that he had greens of some kind at every meal.

The University Extension for the Rural Districts has been a great help to me the last two

years. I have learned so much from them. The coming year they will teach us more about foods and their effects on the system. What I have already learned has been a benefit, but I am looking forward with much interest to the classes this summer.

March 25, 1925

You are certainly the best and dearest to write to me when I neglect you so. But my life is so full of work I can't write, at least as often as I would like to, and I do love to get letters.

I was delighted to get a new friend and I clasped my hands with joy, and then Daddy said, "Go slow. If Mrs. T. and this club lady knew what sort of women you have taken up with, they 'd have nothing more to do with you."

So, now, Mother Superior, I come to confession and I need advice. On only one subject are Daddy and I out, and that 's my new club up here. You see it 's this way. At heart Daddy is an aristocrat. He 'll quote Bobby Burns about "A man 's a man for a' that and a' that," but he does n't practise what he preaches. He considers me so fragile, so nice, so dainty and everything, that I must n't have anything

to do with anybody who has the least blemish on her reputation.

So for twelve years I have minded him, and then I could n't stand it any longer. I started this club. It has twenty active members and they are all living straight now. The club is keeping some of them straight, they are so anxious to belong. Here is what some of them are: (1) Mrs. C. has two children and almost kills herself once a year to avoid a baby. (2) Mrs. T. is not married, but says she is. We all know better. She lives with Mr. T. and has two children, and does what Mrs. C. does every year. She has wretched health like Mrs. C. (3) Mrs. S. left her husband one winter and lived with the hired man several months. Her husband told her to get a divorce, and she did, but married, not the hired man, but the Greek cook at a railroad construction camp east of us last fall. She is fifty and he is thirty, and it is a poor match. (4) Mary has an illegitimate child, eleven years old, but is a fine woman, and has a good husband now. (5) Mrs. N. is an Austrian and can't speak good English yet, but she has three nice children and a good reputation. (6) Mrs. M. kept what we call "two husbands" up here. It 's hard to make a living, she had

many children, and an extra man to work was a great help. When I moved up here fourteen years ago there were seven women who lived with two husbands. Mrs. M. was put out of the Farmers' Union because she kept two husbands, but she is living straight now. (7) Mrs. A. is a coarse type that you find in logging camps. She is used to fighting and hair pulling, but has become very sedate and peaceful now. (8) Mrs. W. has spent twenty years as cook in logging camps. The hard work has refined and aged her.

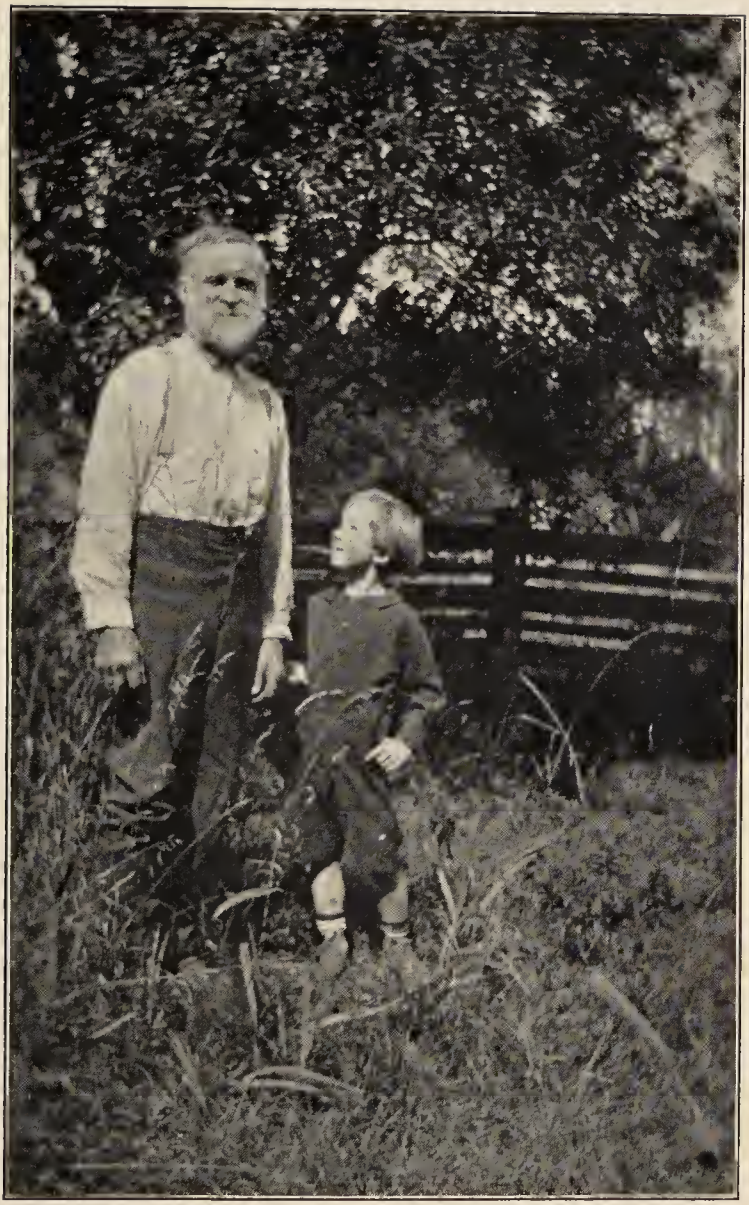
I could go on like this all night. These women have many children, swarms of them in some homes. Daddy claims they are not in my class, that he who touches pitch will be defiled. Then something heart-rending will happen and he 'll say, "You 'll see the nice women on the prairies won't speak to you when they know who you consort with." And I tell him it is n't so. The women on the prairie are too busy painting their complexions to worry about me, and the University Extension ladies just love me and tell me how much I 'm helping them.

Maybe Daddy is right. I 'll confess this much, I don't feel the aversion I used to to a fallen woman. This aversion was the result of

my mother's extremely Puritan ideals. One day a girl of sixteen came to a school entertainment in our schoolhouse here and she had in her arms a six-weeks-old illegitimate child by a married man. She was there on a seat all alone, and I just picked myself up and went and sat down beside her and held the baby for her. I would have done anything to bring her to lead a good life, but she went to the dogs just the same, and is so miserable now. If I 'd had my club this would n't have happened. But it was years ago. Now in the city you 'd cut dead these women with a past. I know it. A nice woman on the prairie had made a misstep in her youth. She came West to start a new life. An old neighbor saw her and told about her. Nobody goes near her now. That 's what Daddy goes by. I used to feel that I must read, study, to go back into the world some day and be broad-minded and take my place and associate with cultured people once more. You said my last letter was cheerful, and I 'm glad. It 's because I 've found my life work. This section has a bad name, and it 's because it 's poor and hidden in the timber and mountains. I shall change the bad name to a good name if I live long enough. It 's uphill work.

Well, I tell Daddy I 'm in now, with both feet, and as long as I 'm true to myself it does n't matter what other people think about me. As far as I can see, it does n't make any difference. The prairie club insist that I must belong to their club down there, and I try to get down there once in a while. There are fourteen members — it 's limited to this number. They dance and play cards and meet twice a month. They are very exclusive, up to date, and I have n't the clothes to attend in, so I have n't gone much of late years. Every summer when my garden is ready, so I have peas and lettuce and new potatoes, I stuff a couple of hens, and have the club all up for dinner. Then the vines and bushes cover up the tumbledown looks of the place.

Every summer Boy and I make bird houses. They are rough and crude, but the birds don't care, and so every year we add new folks to our bird village, for that is what the garden looks like. Last year two pairs of wrens moved in, and we already had a martin, several bluebirds, and three wren couples, besides the birds that build their own nests. I make the holes small in the bird houses, for sometimes I 've had trouble with the pine squirrels who eat the eggs.



Mr. Rose and Karl, Aged Five

One day about four years ago I went down on the prairie after my mail. We did n't have a R. route up here then, you know. There were several mail boxes down there, and a large dumpy woman was getting her mail too, and I saw that she had been crying. I knew who she was, but had never met her; but I started in to talk to her, and as everybody tells me their troubles it was n't long before she told me. They were dreadfully poor, trying to pay for a place, and she was going to have a baby. She had three nice boys, and she wanted a girl, and the tears ran again, she felt so bad. You see, Mr. C. did n't want the expense of getting a doctor or even a woman. He said he had always tended to stock and never needed to call a doctor and he guessed he could tend a woman all right. Well, I happened to run into a woman down there who used to be a trained nurse, but is married and has a family. I told her about Mrs. C., and she said she 'd look after her for me. She did. She told me about it one day. A few days before Mrs. C. would be confined she walked in with her suitcase and said she 'd come to stay awhile. And she sent for good old Dr. H. and he had to take the baby; but it 's a lovely little girl, and the mother just

adores it. So now you have one of my baby stories.

It takes money to run the club up here, there are so many in trouble, so we pieced a quilt and raffled it off at the schoolhouse last week, and took in twenty dollars. We found an old woman living in a shack with her son, and she was nearly ninety. We sent her a potted plant, and she cried, and said she thought nobody knew about her and everyone had forgotten her. The old woman who came out in an oxcart over the Oregon trail when she was seven died last summer. Well, we made her last days comfortable, anyway. I met a rough lumberjack one day, and he says to me, "I did n't think much of your club when you started it, but my hat goes off when I meet any of youse now."

My club up here had one meeting in our little acre cemetery, and we fixed up things real nice. Some raked and burned up the accumulation of years, while others lettered names and dates on white-painted headboards for the baby graves. We put up eighteen of them in the afternoon. It was a busy day, but everybody seemed happy. The happiness that comes from doing.

July 6, 1925

The weeds in the acre on the prairie took me longer than I expected. I 'm not used to that kind of work; it takes a Jap to do it, but I experimented, first one way and then another. First I straddled the row on my knees, one knee on each side of the row and with a hand weeder in one hand, hacking at the weeds, and the other hand pulling out plants where they were too thick. I got along pretty good, doing a row in about two hours. But then burning pain came on my knees and I found them red and swollen and some big blisters. That would never do, so I walked to the nearest house and borrowed two gunny sacks and some sack twine. No one lives on the acre I have rented. I rolled a sack around each knee and tied it, and started the second row. I finished the day that way, but it worried me to find that I had slowed down instead of speeding up. As the sun rose higher and became hotter, it was all I could do to keep up my morale and stick her out. I tried all kinds of ways to amuse my mind. I pictured you and the girls drinking iced lemonade on the deck of a beautiful ship, and J. fox-trotting with a handsome lieutenant, going out to the islands. My water jug did n't taste half

so lukey after that. The rows were so long they looked like railroad tracks coming together at the far end. It brought a long-forgotten picture to my mind. Many years ago I saw Mansfield. I don't remember whom he played with, but I think it was Julia Marlowe. There was some misunderstanding and the heroine went back to her humble life in the country. The hero hunted her up and found her in the "lettuce fields of France." Those long rows of lettuce looked just like the long rows of beets. So after that it was n't in the beet fields I was weeding, it was in the "lettuce fields of France."

I stood it three days on my knees and then they were so bad I sat down and moved along like a frog in little jumps. In two days I did n't have any seat in my overalls and nothing to patch them with. "There 's always something to take the joy out of life," as Daddy says. Then I took the hoe and walked stooped, and hoed and pulled, and next day I could hardly get out of bed. My back seemed to have gone back on me. I made breakfast and washed the dishes three times a day for my board, and I planned to write letters nights, but was too tired. I talked to myself all day long; it helped me to forget the blazing sun

overhead and the dust and the long, long rows. The utter hopelessness in Daddy's old eyes drives me on. I have thought how nice it would be if we had old-age pensions. Nothing to dread any more. No hunger, no cold. It would be heaven here on earth.

Boy and I have been reading *Alice in Wonderland.* He wants my little "22" so he can "get" that March hare who was so mean to Alice. That March hare lives in the woods just east of us — he 's seen him lots of times he says. But out in the beet field the song the Mock Turtle sang rang in my head day after day, but the words were a little different. I tried to get rid of the jingle, but it persisted: —

"Will you work a little faster?" said old Summer to the snail.

"For Old Winter 's just behind me, and he 's treading on my tail."

It hustled me up all right. I had another acre of vegetables and beets at home and I could n't be at it all summer. Well, I finished it in seven days and came home to find my garden choked with weeds and drying up badly. Have been at it ever since. Except for two days when I loused chickens on a hen ranch down on the prairie. Gee, it was hot in that

henhouse. I shed everything but my overalls, and I got thirty-five cents an hour, and we, another woman and I, did a hen and a half a minute. That 's ninety hens an hour, but experienced workers do a hundred an hour. My job was to catch the hen with a miniature shepherd's crook that caught the leg, put a ring on the right leg, and pass her to the other woman, who put on lice poison and threw her into the hen yard.

The Spokane paper said the heat broke all records, going to 102 in the shade. There was no time for dreaming, or even thinking. I was glad I was little and thin, and my little crook was flying every minute faster and faster. Poor frightened hens! But I was happy, for I was earning a pair of new shoes for Daddy and a sack of flour. Daddy's wheat is all gone and we have been without bread some time. It 's been hardest on the boy, but we 'll have plenty from now on if I can pick up a day's work now and then. The future looks much brighter.

If I were to put down on paper one half of the struggle, one half of the hardships, or picture one winter, day by day, you could hardly believe it to be true, and yet my life is not half so hard as many here, up in these hills. I can

plan ahead fairly well; I know food chemistry and what is needed to keep healthy. When winter comes, I 'll have about the same amount of wheat for Daddy to thrash out with the old team, enough potatoes and vegetables and sugar beets to make molasses, which will give us all the sweets we need. Fruit is scarce, but I will have crab apples and rhubarb to can, and that will furnish the acids. A cow to make soups for Daddy and Boy. As Daddy says, "We have taken our noble President's advice and are trying to raise everything we need on the farm." If everyone would try this, it would be better for them. Every month some family is pulling out because they can't make it. M.'s have gone to live in a logging camp where he can work. S. went back to Oklahoma last week. B.'s lost their place because they could n't pay the interest on the mortgage. L. pulled out with his wife and four lovely children. I asked him, "Where are you going?" He said, "God knows." They lived closest to us, and how little we know even our nearest neighbors. When they left, Mrs. L. and the children walked on ahead and stopped to say good-bye to me. It was exactly twelve o'clock and I had a kettle of soup waiting for

Daddy, as he had n't come in yet. The soup was made from field peas and a piece of pork and it was "licking good," as Boy says. "You 're starting early," says I to Mrs. L. "Have you already had your lunch, or are you going to picnic along the road?" She startled me by saying quietly: "We have n't had anything to eat to-day and there 's not much show of our getting anything very soon." I said, "Come right in. There 's soup and bread and butter and rhubarb sauce, lots of it. I 'll tell Mr. L. to tie his team and come in too." I never saw youngsters so hungry in all my life. The four-year-old girl stood up in her chair and screamed with joy at the sight of the food I put on her plate.

I watched them until they were out of sight over the hill and it was with a feeling of insecurity that I came back into the house. Perhaps it will be me next. There are empty farmhouses all over the West, and each one has its story.

Daddy says every day that he 's going to pull out and go to British Columbia. "Why," he says, "it 's better than a stump ranch; there 'll be grass for the cows and the boy will have a better chance." I don't want to go.

It 's so beautiful here. I love it, and I dread the unknown. What could I do there with a feeble old man and a young child?

July 19, 1925

The garden is burned up by the sun, and not a drop of rain for weeks. The peas dried while in bloom, except the early ones, from which we had a few messes. The potatoes held out the longest and have tiny potatoes like small nuts, but real good, and I 'm using them as long as they last. Such a nice garden as it was in the spring, and to look at it now! While pulling up the dried pea vines for the cow, I thought hard. If you think hard enough and long enough on anything, it will finally come to you. Down on those irrigated tracts there was garden truck nice and green, and I had no money. But I made a proposition that had "come" to me and the result is I get canning to do on shares. I have finished the peas and have seventy quarts for my share and am working on string beans this week. I pick them before it 's hot and get up at four o'clock to do so. Shelling so many peas was trying, the days are so hot, but it 's over with and I feel good when I look at my jars of peas. Boy goes with me and we walk,

but it's nice and cool and we never start for home until after seven. After the beans, there will be squash and corn to can. It has made me very happy. In a dry year, I must have more provisions, as I must reckon on enough to last nine months at least. I divide up my supplies into nine parts and as I come to each month's allowance I divide it into so much for each week. Early settlers in New England used to do that and Daddy chants a line (when things don't hold out and he has to go short in the spring) that says, "Only five grains of corn, mother, only five grains of corn." He varies the number of grains each time; sometimes it 's six grains, and sometimes seven. But I 'll get through to grass nicely this year, for I 'll have milk. Other years the cows dried up on the poor feed, but this year they are going to have beets, a pailful each twice a day. That 's why I work so hard on my acre of beets. Last year we did not have a drop of milk until spring, and determination to have milk another winter helps me to weed and water the beets on the prairie. Daddy and Boy help to water them and they are looking fine.

"Be a living question mark," my old professor in physics used to say, "and you 'll never

grow old." I believe I live up to it, for I question the why of everything and get no answer. There are so many things that would make this life happier, why must I go without? These are questions I ask of life and get no answer. If it were n't for "make-believe" I 'd give up and become an old woman, tired and discouraged. But Boy has named me Jenny Wren, and who ever saw a mother wren tired? She 's busy, busy, busy all day long hunting grub for her nestlings, and so am I. But I take time to swing in Boy 's little rope swing under the old apple tree and we have a teetertotter in the barnyard and we do have fun. When I play, I 'm Jenny, but at night I am just "Mother." If you ask Boy what his mother is, he 'll tell you: "She 's just a little girl." The other day he was out in the barnyard with Daddy and he saw me in the garden. He turned to Daddy and said with a grin, "I wonder what that little rascal is up to now." It amuses Daddy. But I have always loved children and one must have love and infinite patience with small children. Which reminds me that I was reprimanded once by the principal because my kiddies made so much noise at times that the room above was disturbed. We were just having fun and play-

ing games and I toned them down, but that principal did get a good jolt a bit later. There were twelve rooms in the building and I had the primary with sixty babies in it. A much-traveled woman, who was a member of the school board, went around visiting the schools and dropped into my room one day. I did n't know her, but my children treated her fine. She liked us so well she stayed all afternoon and became one of the family. Later she addressed a principals' meeting (nineteen big schools in our city) and this is what she said, I was told: "I have journeyed in many lands and have visited schools in this country and in Europe, but I have at last found the perfect school right here in my home town, in Room 1, at the Jackson School."

You see, the old superintendent and I were chums and he gave me nearly everything I asked for. When I wanted a kindergarten table and chairs, he hunted them up in the garret of an old church (the Sunday school had discarded them) and he let me teach in my own way, which was original to say the least. I was the mother and they were my children. They answered the door and seated visitors and talked to them. We did the regular kin-

dergarten work and first primary combined, but that did n't take us long and we had games and stories the rest of the time and visitors nearly every day. I had no rule except to be kind and not too noisy. They were free to walk and talk to each other, and everyone was so busy and happy the time just flew and soon the gong rang to go home.

July 26, 1925

I 'm worried to-night, not so much for myself as for my neighbors north a couple of miles. The smoke is rolling up fast, big billows of it in the sky, and one by one the settlers have gone by and none have come back, which means there is a big fire and help needed. I hear S. has been appointed fire warden for this district, and a better man could n't be found, even if he is a bootlegger. A big, clean, helpful man, he was quite downhearted when he got arrested and sentenced to six months in jail. "I ought n't to have done it," he told me, "but times are so hard." "Cheer up," I said, "no use to worry about it now, but do keep out of the real penitentiary — it 's so disgraceful to your family!" Daddy and I don't believe in bootlegging nor lawbreaking, but you can't

do anything in a community if you antagonize people. I would n't sleep nights if I had helped to put anyone in jail. I love freedom so much myself.

July 30. — Mrs. F.'s house is gone. She lost everything, which was n't much, but all she had. More work for our Club. All the men except Daddy are gone there. He can't go any more. A strong wind is blowing the flames north, but if it changes, it will be so thick with smoke one can hardly breathe. We are not in any danger, as there is a road between us, and that 's a fine firebreak.

There 's about a hundred settlers fighting it, and the logging company just sent down as many more to help. Mrs. L. got out in time. These fires roll awfully fast when it 's dry, and there 's plenty of slashings to feed it along. I see the smoke clouds rolling faster and faster. And what do you think started it? An orphaned boy that 's been working around for his board set fire to a yellow jacket's (yellow hornet's) nest in the woods. Those yellow jackets are pesky, but that orphan had better vanish from this neck of the woods or he might get strung up. We consider anyone that starts a fire as worse than any other criminal. It 's

looking bad. I go out to look at it every few minutes. It looks awfully close. There are several families that will have to get out before very long. It seems to be only a city block away, but that 's on account of the hills and the dense smoke. I can tell when the fire strikes into green timber and when it 's in slashings. The smoke is so different. It 's interesting to watch it, but I feel bad over the homes that are going. Nothing much in the way of buildings — just shacks mostly — but they sheltered from the storms and each was a home.

Latest reports from the fire: A man just came by and says the Forest Reserve has sent help and that the L. home is n't burned yet, and it may be saved; but they are all out, in case the wind comes up.

August 2. — The fire is still bad and cars are running back and forth all night with men. The wind has changed and it 's racing up into the mountains on the reserve. It gives the settlers a chance to back-fire before the wind changes again.

You have reason to be proud of your children. When I see fine children, I know they have pure-bred parents, speaking in stock terms. Many times have I wondered why I married an old

man, but I 'd do it over again to get my boy. Daddy's ancestors are the finest in Scotland and England. I believe in blood and good breeding and I love Daddy for the beauty of his mind, which is the result of generations. What I mean is this: Leisure is needed to cultivate the mind in music, literature, and so forth. Therefore my boy is more receptive and by instinct chooses the better things because I chose for him a father of that type. There are members of the family still living in the ancestral castle in Scotland. His grandfather was a captain in the British navy and we have his old telescope and several other old keepsakes.

I told Daddy to-day that I was ready to pull out any time he was. If he thought it best to go, I was willing to follow him and work for him. If things get much harder than they are, we can't even exist here and we must go like the others, but never to a city. I 'd take up a homestead in British Columbia before I 'd live in a city. The country has got into my very bones. I love it — the trees and birds and growing things. And city, what would that give me? A little comfort and starve my soul. Better to die fasting with a flower in my hand.

December 17, 1925

I have no gifts to give, just myself, and I will write you a letter and try to put myself in it. Times have been getting harder here in the West and there seems to be no hope left for the farmers, who are leaving by hundreds each summer. This fall for several months there were sales of household goods and farm implements every day right in our vicinity. I went to two, not to buy, but because they were old neighbors. It was a shame how cheap everything went. Good cows as low as eleven dollars and machinery in the same way. But, you see, nobody has any money. Then this summer was the dryest in fifty years. There was actually no rain from early spring until late in the fall. When I could n't make it any longer I got a job for two days a week at a dollar a day. That was early in March and I have just been laid off, so I have a little time to myself again.

The two dollars was a godsend, but I did n't realize how it would tire me. I put in a splendid big garden at home and the blossoms wilted on the vines.

With no vegetables, which we almost exist on most years, I knew I 'd have to step lively if

we were to eat this winter. I had one large pig and three small ones that I 'd traded with neighbors for, but nothing to feed them on, and what I earned had to support them and us too.

It just kept them alive until the roots on the prairie got big enough to pull. And we were hungry all the time after July! We ate up the hens, except four, but I raised a bunch of late chickens and I don't see what they lived on, for I could n't buy much grain. Lots of vegetables on the prairie, though, and I begged cull stuff and canned on shares till my cans got full, and I bought four sacks of small potatoes; and while the big pig did n't get fat, still he put on enough meat to make him in fair rig, and we butchered him two weeks ago. The cows dried up early in the summer when the pasture dried, so we 'd had no fat and so little meat that it was just a reminder of how meat tasted. I made a hen last a whole week, and that 's going some when things are short.

So that pig certainly tasted good, we were so hungry for fat and meat. Now if things go right I 'll have a beef to butcher in January, as I 'm feeding one heavy on roots. Roots and straw. It will be just passing fair, but make lots of soup. I had an acre and three quarters of

winter wheat and it yielded quite good and matured before the drought, so we have bread and cereal from that. That terrible blizzard last year killed lots of orchards and froze all the fruit buds on the prairie, but my few scrubby old apple trees were so sheltered here in the timber that they bore as usual, and so you see God tempered the wind for the shorn lamb.

That makes my table complete. Bread, cereal (ground wheat), fruit, vegetables, and fat meat. I feel very proud of myself, for many families are leaving because they tell me they 'll starve to death if they stay. And they have young husbands to work for them. My one thought all the year round is to get through the winter, and I think I will if nothing happens.

Daddy is getting more weak and does n't do hardly anything. Some days he feels pretty good, but most of the time he just sits and sleeps in his chair. But Boy is lots of help to me and I 'm getting along lots better than I used to. I never saw such an exodus of farmers from the land before. Out here they seem to have gone crazy to get to town to get a job. They get rid of everything and just leave, usually in a tin Lizzie. This is a small community,

but fifteen families are gone and our school has dwindled down to eleven pupils, only seven families represented.

Well, I tried to cut cordwood and Boy and I sawed and cut down several small trees six to eight inches through. I did n't dare tackle any bigger ones, but I gave it up because it was too strenuous and nothing in it. Daddy laughed at us for tackling it at all, but I felt that I had to try anyway in case I might be able to do it — I try lots of things that I have to give up. Ploughing, I got so banged up turning the corners that I was almost made sick and surely was awful sore for days. Another failure.

No, the boy is n't as big as that checkered mackinaw. But, as his coat is too thin, I use it as an ulster on him when we drive in the winter. The sleeves come down over his hands and keep them warm. He is going to school every day and doing fine. He has taken to music and is learning it fast and well. I believe he will become a fine musician; he seems to just love it, and it 's a terrible punishment to him to even suggest closing the old piano, and he just eats up scales that most children hate so. He had a serious accident in August, as he smashed the forefinger of his left hand in a small hay-cutter

while he was with me one day on the prairie, The doctor took off nearly all of the first joint, but sewed the flesh back again so the end of the bone is well cushioned. It 's well enough now so he plays the piano with it, though it 's a trifle short. I was glad it was no worse and healed nicely.

For over two years now we have had no bread except what we thresh out with the horses walking on the grain, and then grind ourselves on a little hand grist-mill, or coffee-mill. It makes a coarse bread, but so healthy for a weak stomach. By washing the wheat and then grinding it before it gets bone dry, it makes better flour. What I sift out I toast for coffee or boil for a cereal. We are so used to it now we don't miss our old fare and it certainly makes me feel good.

December 17, 1925

Well, I spent the summer so hard at work I did n't notice how the weeks flew by. And they were gone before I knew it. The worst drought we 've ever had struck us, and my little old engine needed a new cylinder and other repairs which I could n't buy, so I did n't get a drop of water on my garden. I cried when I saw it

wilt away. The carrots stayed the longest, but reached only finger size and sat loose in the dust. Well, I gave up and began to think what I would have to cook when winter came. If I had known, I could have provided plenty, for I had rented an acre of irrigated land on shares and put it into mangels and half-sugars for the cows. I would have planted vegetables for us instead. How hard I worked over that acre! It was the weediest patch I 've ever seen. It took me two weeks steady crawling on my hands and knees before I got it clean, and I washed dishes and cleaned for my board after each meal. I could hardly roll out of bed mornings at first. Then it had to be irrigated every week all summer, and cultivated, and the weeds hoed out that sprang up after each watering. What with this job and working two days a week packing eggs, crating frys, and running at other errands and jobs, and canning vegetables on shares, I had no minute that I was n't tired. The thought of winter drove me on. Those endless days of crawling were the worst. After one day of it I made a thick roll of gunny sacks and tied over each knee. The land is gravelly and my knees swelled up an inch and were like boils to walk on. I tried sitting and

moving ahead in little jumps, but that soon put me in as painful a shape also, besides wearing a big hole. I recited every poem I knew in those weary hours and talked to myself, trying to keep up my morale. I did n't mind the heat, for I had a jug of water, but the rows were so long and the weeds so many I could hardly find the little plants.

And I had to watch myself so I would n't lag. I tried to see how fast I could do a row and to finish so many rows at a certain time. I don't think I wasted many minutes this summer, and the result is that we 'll pull through another winter. We will butcher a beef to-morrow that I will can up at once. It goes farther that way, for I count my cans and divide them into so much of this and that each week, so I know just what I have and that it lasts so long. I often wonder what you think of me, writing all such stuff, but I have nothing else to think about except this one problem, how am I going to get through to grass again. Daddy said the other day that he 'd quit worrying, and that 's because I never bother him any more about it. I go ahead and plan and do things and seldom tell him until afterwards.

Nothing has happened except one of my

small pigs died, cause unknown; one calf got smothered by the others crowding on him one cold night — such things happen, but nothing to worry about when it 's done. I still have two pigs left, and one I will smoke for the summer if he ever gets fat enough and the other salt down next fall for the winter. We have no radio, but I think they are wonderful. I had never heard one, but my brother had made one and one day last winter I could n't hold my curiosity any longer so I walked down one snowy evening after dark, going back in the early morning, for Daddy was ailing and I had the chores to do. The first thing I heard was a voice reciting the poem by Hood called "The Song of the Shirt." It was a full, resonant voice, a man's, and he lectured on it. It filled me with new hope and courage. He said Hood set England on fire when he wrote that poem and they made the condition of those poor seamstresses better. That Harriet Stowe made an old cabin famous and awakened the world to what slavery was.

I have just put up a bookshelf for the boy so he could have his own books on his own shelf, and I have given him all my old school readers and spellers for his shelf too. He is painting

pictures for me now by way of keeping quiet so I can write.

The school-teacher moved into that little cabin north of us Christmas week. She is a lovely woman in many ways, sociable and refined, and is a splendid musician. Just at the last minute I had to study up and take part in the Xmas entertainment at the schoolhouse. I was in two little plays and was a man in one and an old woman in the other one. Somehow or other it got into the papers around here that we were giving an entertainment and a Christmas tree at our schoolhouse and many strangers came, so in spite of our dwindled population the little room was crowded, and all in all there must have been two hundred people there. The programme went off fine. They said I made a swell man. I dyed some cotton brown and made whiskers and a moustache and wore a cap pulled over my ears and an overcoat to make me look big. And I got angry in the play and threw things around. It was great fun. In the other play we were a couple of back-East farmers traveling on a train for the first time. It was really funny and the audience let us know, whooping and whistling and stamping to beat the band. The kids spoke

their pieces fine and the little school sang many Xmas songs with the teacher at the organ. Then Santa Claus passed the treat around and everybody got a tiny sack of candy and peanuts and one orange. There were even three sacks of candy over, and we were glad we 'd made so many, so no one went home neglected. The Club up here furnished the treat. We have changed the name and now call it "The Civic Club," and I persuaded them to join the State Federation this summer. I know what the State Federation are working for and the things they are trying to change. Take old age pensions, and see Daddy who would rather starve than go on the county; the exodus of the farmers to the city does n't mean anything when you read it in the papers, but you 'll see it in a different way when you 've read what I wrote about the folks who had to go. They may blue-pencil what I wrote about the women who had so many children they would n't have any more, and the effect. It was maybe a little too strong. Daddy thinks they won't accept them at all, but I 'll write them over then and tone them down a bit.

I have changed my mind on some things since you were here. You see I have seen

more and tried to understand, and I see what I am up against better. This land up here is sterile and won't produce without fertilizer. There is n't enough wood left to support us in any degree of comfort, and it 's too hard work for me to turn wood-chopper, and Boy is too soft and young. I want a place where grass grows freely and the land is rich. Homesteads are all gone here, and I 'm going to pull out for a homestead in Alberta just as soon as I can. I have looked it up and planned it out, where I 'm going and the cost and conditions, and I think I can make it. I can't go this year, but I will gradually get ready and by thinking and working towards the one end it will come to pass.

Here I worked all summer to get roots to fatten a small beef so we could have soup, and something for the pigs and cows. There was no hay, and others around here cut wood and trade it for a little hay in town. I was fortunate to find a straw-stack for sale at a dollar a load.

Yes, I 'm going, and I hope I won't be disappointed in the new land. If my story is accepted and I get a check, that will be the beginning of a fund to get us there, but I 'm going in a wagon if I have to. It 's Alberta or bust. You see I can't fight conditions over which I

have no control, and when young, able-bodied men can't support their families any longer, how can I do it? The conditions are too hard. In Canada I can get rich land and good range outside for stock. Also help from the government to buy stock, implements, and seed. Lots of people have gone and are doing fine up there. I find farming and stock is not so hard as making cordwood. I have plenty to eat this winter. I am actually gaining a little and I should n't wonder if I weigh ninety pounds now, and I 'm never sick. So don't worry about me. I 'll come out all right, and winter is soon half gone. It is n't the fellows that are in the thick of the fight that are worrying — they 're too busy; and that 's the way with me. I 'm too busy to worry.

It 's been lonesome since the white dog died and I have n't found another to take his place. Dogs are such good company, but I don't want just any old thing. They stay with us so long that I 'd like a real good one, and maybe some day I 'll run across a genuine collie pup, but in the meantime I 'm raising a couple of kittens, just to watch their antics winter nights.

Won't there be lots of things to write about in a new country way out on the frontier, 250 miles

from a railroad! It will be the making of Boy. I don't believe in a soft snap for boys. They get too soft and selfish and never learn the meaning of life till it 's too late. And you know a great man must have a great mother, so I must begin pretty soon or it will be too late.

January 3. — Boy had a touch of flu and gave it to Daddy, and then Daddy took cold and got inflammatory rheumatism, which I went for hard. Sweated him out of it at last, and he 's up and around again with no pain except his left arm and shoulder. It don't sound like much, but it kept me more than busy.

January 8. — Daddy was in bed about a week. How fast the time goes by! I have to stop and count on my fingers to find the date. Violet, my pretty pink-nosed tabby, met with a painful accident yesterday in the barn. She jumped for a mouse and caught her hind foot on a large tin box and wrenched her big toe out of joint, and she won't let me touch it, so it will always have to stay that way, I guess. She 's an unusually nice cat, soft and pretty and quiet. I have one other tabby with the most wonderful green eyes; two big toms, and two kittens. I have to have kittens because they

are so amusing to watch winter evenings. It would be too lonesome without them.

In the afternoon of Xmas day I took Daddy and Boy down on the prairie to hear the radio. My brother has made himself one, and Daddy has heard it only once and then it was a poor night. I thought there might be some Xmas music on and there was some very beautiful singing. Boy fell asleep just when it got good about eight o'clock, and pretty soon Daddy followed suit, and I was left to enjoy it alone.

Now I want to impress upon your mind that I have plenty to eat and am not suffering for anything, and that I am prepared for still more strenuous times. I am well, and that 's a fortune itself.

June 8, 1926

It would be a treat to have the magazines you mentioned to read the coming long winter in the wilds of Canada, whither I am going in about two weeks. While Congress is busy talking about farm relief, the farmers are leaving for the city. I cannot go to the city with my family. Mr. Rose is old and very frail (seventy-three years last winter) and I weigh less than ninety pounds. Our one child is a sturdy

little lad of nine summers. Twenty years ago, I, a teacher in the primary department in an Eastern city, came here for T. B. I am well now, but not strong, so the only way I could see to make a living was to go where an old man, a tiny woman, and a young child could get food easily. Hunt, trap, and fish is what we can do yet, since farming has failed here in the West. Why, in one place here twenty families have left out of twenty-four. It 's what is called dry-farming — just grain.

I am going far away: Three hundred miles from a railroad; no neighbors but Indians and wild animals. "I 'll be out of humanity's reach, I must finish my journey alone." But I will study, read my books over and over, teach the boy, and saw wood to keep us warm. The mail goes up in a sled once a month all winter and every week during the short summer. My address will be Fort Vermilion, Alberta, but I will be farther in, so won't always be able to get the mail regularly. I 'm taking what I can with me. They are very fussy about letting emigrants in, I find. I get a carload laid down at Fort Vermilion for $165, and I 'm busy packing up what is mostly junk and remains, trying to get a carload so we can get in. I am

writing now on a packing box and it has soiled my paper, I see. If you wish me to have the magazines, send them soon so I can pack them. I 'll read them aloud to Daddy the coming winter when the thermometer gets down to 65 or 78 (below) as it did one winter. Won't I have to cut lots of wood!

June 20, 1926

Your letter came yesterday and I am answering at once, as my time here is getting short and I wanted to tell you that I would appreciate the little paper for Laddie very much. He reads quite well and enjoys the stories.

British Columbia has a better, milder climate, but in my circumstances would n't make me a living. Settlers have poured in there and the best is taken. There are two drawbacks where I am going. The cold in the winter, and about six weeks of pesky mosquitoes in summer. I know how to tan skins, and if I survive the first winter I 'll prepare for the next one better. For the mosquitoes, I have made canopies for the beds of unbleached cheesecloth. I have two large tents and expect to live in one and keep the horses in the other, if they need a barn, until I can put one up.

I don't know what material to build with. If

"My Most Precious Picture"

MR. ROSE DURING THE LAST WINTER ON THE STUMP FARM

there is good sod you 'll see us working like beavers building a sod house. By raking the walls on the inside they can be plastered and be real sanitary. Perhaps 't will be a dugout in the side of a hill, or maybe of logs. Am taking one old team and my old driving horse. Also three hens and a rooster and our old dog. Times are very hard out here. There is no work for anyone, and I know of late years when we have n't had enough to eat. There has been a seven-year drought, and while I 've managed somehow to have something to feed my family, it has not always been sufficient nor nutritious enough. It does n't make much difference where one lives if there is enough to eat, and I 'm going where it grows. I found I had to take a car in order to get over the line and be allowed to settle, as Daddy is over the age limit. I will receive *McCall's*, *Youth's Companion*, and the *Geographic*. No books so far.

My education was cut short when T. B. came and I had to come West. I had $400 saved up to go to college, and it went for doctors' bills and expenses. But I still cling to the dream and some day I shall go. Now I 'm planning to go with Laddie. We will prepare for college together up there in the wilderness. Perhaps

I can find someone who will tutor him in Greek and Latin. There are many priests among the Indians who are well educated. I am a Unitarian myself, but very liberal, and have many Catholic friends. The Canadian Government Agent is quite interested in my venture and wants a monthly letter to send to the Government at Ottawa. I have a small camera and will send some pictures too. I will keep a diary, as I expect to live a strenuous life till Laddie gets old enough to help.

My health is perfect and my legs tireless. I often walk ten miles on a hot day if I can see my way to get a dollar by it. But I can't lift nor do real work like big folks do. At college I shall major in journalism. You would know better than I do what paper or magazine would be a help. Also I am weak in history. I have a U. S. history, but that is all, and I know that, but of other countries I am truly very ignorant. The winter is very long up there and I have tried to prepare myself somewhat. I shall sew patchwork and carpet-rags and write letters to a heap of shut-ins and tend my traps and fish through the ice and study and skate and cut wood. I 'll keep busy.

This will be the last letter from here.

July 10, 1926

I am now on the steamer going north and will land very soon, so this will be a short letter so I can get it ready and leave it here on the steamer to take back to civilization. We will land at S. Point, which is ten miles before we come to the trading post. There is only one white settler there and he is on the boat. He has fifteen children — is a very large, fine-looking, jovial man. His father was a missionary and the first white man here. He has taken a great fancy to Daddy, and as he is a very rich man his word is law on the river. The boat was crowded and we had no berths and night was coming on. He called the purser and told him to give us a good stateroom and look after Mr. Rose, as he looked tired and needed rest. Say, I never saw a man jump around so swiftly. The best stateroom was given to us and we had every attention as if we were rich. Daddy was eight days in the freight car and was in a dreadful state when he arrived. I took him to a hotel and gave a woman a dollar to carry me four pails of water from the creek and heat two cans of it, and then I bathed the poor dear and put him to bed. He could n't even eat for exhaustion. He was just a helpless baby.

I 'm so glad Mr. S. has taken charge of us. Now everything will be all right and I 've quit worrying. Boy is the only child on the boat and is very happy. Everybody wants him, and from the captain, who coaxes him up into his tower and lets him use his telescopes, to the engineer and deck hands, he surely has a good time.

Leaving Edmonton, the freight that Daddy was on lost twelve cars just behind him. They turned turtle and piled up on the track so that my train was delayed eleven hours. Finally we got going again and we had a wreck, but our car was left standing on the track. This was in a swamp and we were there six hours at night, and the mosquitoes descended on us and Boy almost lost his mind, though I wrapped his legs in my jacket and fanned him constantly. Finally they rustled up an old locomotive and a freight car and took us to Peace River Town. It was very crowded and the first-class passengers were horrified when they had to ride with us emigrants. Three in a seat and on the floor, just as tight as could be. No lights, and they sang songs as we rode along, for most of us were happy to be going again through the dark hills to safety.

I have no time to write more. The land looks green, lovely, and lonesome. I am a little homesick. Just a tearful feeling.

PART TWO

The New Homestead

Fort Vermilion, Alberta
July 14, 1926

It did take grit to go to a strange land, and my courage almost failed me many times, for I did n't know a soul here or anyone who had ever been here. There were only the government statistics to go by. But when you 're down and out there 's not much to lose, so I staked my all to get here and I 'm not sorry yet. The captain of the steamer was surprised when I told him to land us at a certain point and he told us there was only one white settler there. But he said it did n't matter to him, and he dumped my belongings off on a mud bank where there was no sign of human habitation. I felt like Robinson Crusoe as I stood on the shore of this mighty river and looked at the swamp that edged it, so dense and luxuriant that I had never seen anything like it. The mosquitoes soon put an end to dreaming and we all got busy gathering sticks for a nice smoky fire. The potatoes and bacon cooked

over it tasted good in spite of the cinders that got into the pan. We rolled the boy up in a blanket so even his nose could n't be found by the singing chorus. It looked like rain, so we covered our boxes with the tent and spent the night by the fire. Daddy fell asleep and I covered him up from the mosquitoes with a piece of old canvas. A hard bed for old bones, but the best I could do for that night. I sat there alone, thinking of all that lay ahead to do. No home, no shelter, and a long winter ahead. Two o'clock the heavy dew quieted the mosquitoes and I turned the three old horses loose to feed in the swamp. Following them, I was soon lost in the heavy undergrowth, higher than my head, and I called and called, getting more frightened every moment, and at last I heard Daddy's halloo and he came to meet me through the brush. I was trembling all over when he found me and put his arms around me and held me close. To get lost is a fearful thing here. The captain, the purser, and the cook all warned me to be careful. Then we sat and watched the sun turn the twilight night into day.

The white settler lives a mile inland on a slight rise of the land, as this river sometimes

overflows and covers the river flats, but only for short periods and very seldom. This bottom land is very level and from one half to two miles wide only. The soil is very heavy, black, and rich. Above this the land is higher, not so rich, and lighter.

July 16. — The white settler has given us a bedroom where we sleep — but we eat at our little camp by the river. The river is wonderful, over a mile wide, and flows north. The banks are very low the farther north it flows. The Indians are extremely dark, unkempt, and shiftless. They live entirely by trapping and fishing. There are swarms of "breeds," some of them quite good-looking and once in a while one that could easily pass for white. They furnish the only labor element here and few of them are worth their salt.

July 17. — We have picked out our homestead and will move on to it as soon as possible. It will be tough until we get a cabin and get through the first winter, but if we survive that we 'll be old settlers. The more I see of this country, the better I like it. Coming from a dry country with a blazing sky all summer, it is pleasant to see the fleecy clouds go scudding by, and there 's seldom a day that we don't get

at least one shower. The rain is n't even cold and I go out in it just to get my bobbed head wet as when I was a child back in Illinois. The gardens just love to grow here. Mrs. S. is using green beans, peas, new potatoes, beets, carrots, and lettuce on her table and has radishes coming on new and crisp all summer long. Ever since Daddy begged to die in Canada, the country of his birth, I have studied it, and chose this spot as the best and most available in my meagre circumstances. Daddy will die happy and contented; we 'll have a home without being afraid of being forced to go into some city to die in the slums, and Boy will grow up, like Lincoln, in the wilderness.

The "fur" is pretty well trapped out here along the river. But there will always be some. Dogs are used here all winter and our big black-and-white shepherd dog is very much admired by the Indians and breeds. He is better than their dogs and is worth $75. Now I 'll have him to worry about for fear they steal him. That would break our hearts. We smell like Indians now from sitting in the smoke so much. It 's the only comfort one gets during the day, while at night forgetfulness comes when you crawl under a cheesecloth canopy. Well, I

have found the place where hay and potatoes never fail, thank God. Once more I can say the Twenty-third Psalm when I wake in the morning as I always used to do.

Sunday afternoon. — Mrs. S. gathered her children around the old organ for a few hymns. Each one of us chose a hymn, even the three-year-old baby boy. The young married daughter, home with her wee babe, chose a song about love from the songs of matrimony in the English Prayer and Hymn Book. Her father said, "A good hymn." We sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "Rescue the Perishing," and many others. It gave me hope and strength to carry on when I looked at this wonderful family singing so earnestly alone here in this vastness.

I don't know yet just how I 'll get a home built. If winter comes too fast for me, I 'll have to dig out a room in a small hill on one side of the homestead and put a log front on it. If I have time, we 'll build a room entirely of logs. We have an old mower with us, but no rake, so we 'll have to rake what hay we cut by hand.

> There are hardships that nobody reckons,
> There are valleys unpeopled and still.

But nothing matters, so we get some kind of a shelter before winter comes. The lowest has been 78 degrees below, but it generally stays at 40 degrees below, which is n't so bad. But the winters are very long.

How beautiful it is, and how happy we will be in our little home! I found an old hymn that appealed to me and expresses what I can't say myself.

> Some humble door among Thy many mansions,
> Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,
> And flows forever through heaven's green expansions
> The river of Thy peace.

There is n't time to write to Mrs. W. and you will pass this letter on, for I am working very hard and one letter must do for all. Love to you all and write once in a while. The mail this winter comes up by dog sleds when no other way can be used. So we are n't entirely isolated from the Outside.

July 25, 1926

The boat came up this morning and brought me your letter, and this is just a hasty scrawl that I hope will catch the boat if someone here at the S. ranch goes down to the shore. I love it here, but see hardships ahead. Getting ready

for winter will be a big job. Daddy is poorly. I kept him in bed all day yesterday and he felt stronger to-day, but not able to do anything. But God will see me through and I am happier than I 've been for several years.

It grows here — everything grows, though the season is so short one must hustle to get it planted and harvested. There is wood a plenty to burn, but it takes work to get it ready for winter. There is plenty of water in the majestic river if wells fail. Happy, dear heart! I have reached the garden of Eden. But, there is the winter and the cold, the hard work, the loneliness. I 'll get my mail once a month, I think, for some breed or somebody will come by surely. I repeat the Twenty-third Psalm each day.

August 24, 1926

Have n't a minute to spare, as winter is n't far off, but must write you a few lines, as I know you 'll be anxious about us up here in this vast wilderness. I am still living in a tent and cooking over a camp fire, and it appears to be very healthy, judging by how dirty we get to be. I smell like a smoked herring. No well dug yet, so we get water from the river, and very good water it is. A large bear is prowling

around, but not having shells for bears I can't tackle it yet. I have fifty-six traps of all kinds, which is just one twentieth of what the other trappers have, but I will get more if I catch any fur. The trading post trades you anything you want for fur, charging about four times what it 's worth, plus the freight in. This trading is very interesting indeed. Suppose I take some eggs or butter to the store. They 'll offer me, say, fifty cents a pound or dozen. "Shabby-nacky," or else I can take it home. There is no cash business done at all. But it 's not "so worse," as one man said. The trader will buy you anything from the outside you want, from a box of salve to a threshing machine, providing you have it coming. Furs dropped in price fifty per cent here when the U. S. put a fifty per cent tariff on raw furs. So the poor Indian "gets it in the neck." The trader plays safe.

I went horseback over to see a family living seven miles from us and learned quite a bit about setting the traps. The breeds are really beginning to like us. One smiled at us and joked me about being a barber when he passed by to-day and I was trimming Daddy's hair out in the sunshine in front of the tent. They

are a very quiet, silent race, but once a friend, it 's forever true.

Our homestead is in a bend of the river and has some low hills at the back, where it is thirty feet higher than the river. There is a small lake and a slough with muskrats in it, partly on our place, and the lake on the homestead for Karl to locate on when he is eighteen years old. I expect to make our living catching the rats and a few foxes. The fur is so scarce that the trappers go far inland and have trap lines a hundred miles long. But that leaves what there is here for me; and foxes can run, so I 'll get some, I 'm sure, and rats always live in sloughs. We have been very busy putting up hay. Daddy can't work hard, but he got a job from the white settler to ride the big mower for him for a few days, and in return his breeds stacked up what hay we 'll need for the winter. The hay grew on our homestead, which is nearly all cleaned good hay ground. There is plenty of hay around here, as the white settler has set fires for forty years and cleaned up for fifty miles around his place for his stock to graze on.

You have caught the spirit of my venture. So have the breeds and Indians. They will love us soon. I received all your letters and we

enjoy those editorials. More than before we need a window to see what the world is doing. I do dread the winter, and we are cutting logs and poles, but it 's slow. I have warm blankets and quilts and a moose hide to make us moccasins and ten pounds of wool yarn to knit up, and I shall cut one blanket up for clothing and lining coats and vests. We 'll make it fine. Vegetables never fail here, nor grain or berries. By salting one spot against the prevailing wind deer and moose can be got easily. There are big fish in the river. The Lord is my shepherd once more, and He only helps those that help themselves.

My two good friends will never get over it, I fear. They are shocked to death. So frail, Daddy so old, Boy so young. But that 's what makes it so interesting. Not to go to a poorhouse, nor crawl on my belly in an irrigated garden for a living. As I look at the river on three sides, where there will never be a sign of human habitation in sight,

> I am monarch of all I survey . . .
> From the centre all round to the sea.

We were so tired of half rations, so sick of the struggle. I expect hardships, welcome them, but it will be on a full belly and I can stand it.

August, 1926

I have just received your letter and the boat is n't back yet and I 'm writing in a hurry to thank you for your letter and the things in it. Next two weeks I will write you and Mrs. W. another letter of the events that come and my impressions of this place. I don't know the date; time means nothing here. I am glad Mrs. W. liked the two adventurers she met in the railway depot for forty minutes. I was very tired, worried, and depressed, so I did n't look my best, but I surely felt good when she actually kissed me and Boy good-bye. She did like me a little, and me a perfect stranger too. The white settler's wife is a college woman and she teaches the children and conducts a real school in a log cabin. Two daughters are home from college and one will teach this year and give the mother a little rest. I 'll tell you more about them later, as they are indeed a very interesting family. And these woods and wilderness have human souls buried, I am finding out.

That 's my specialty, digging up the half dead and helping them to find themselves again. Queer, is n't it? They tell me their troubles and I lay them on you.

I am still happy. How wonderful it seems to know I will never starve any more. To always have potatoes and hay for the cow. No "straw horses" any more. Never to hear Daddy say, like Little Claus, "Get up, all my straw horses," and then see the poor ribby creatures try to pull a plough. I have four wool blankets, all heavy, besides quilts. The winter is long and cold and I am trying to prepare for it. I have fifty-six traps and a good location to trap muskrats and also fox. I 'll just make it, I figure, and by next fall have a good vegetable garden and what grain I need for bread. I have a grubstake for the winter and spring of beans, dry peas, rice, flour, and vegetables already cached away. The only thing I 'm worrying about is a place to live in and I have a month to do it in. No need to worry. Hay for the winter, plenty of milk, fish in the river, and wild game and deer to shoot for meat. I 'll make it. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

[*No date*]

The talk now is only "fur" and "dogs." In another month there won't be a breed or Indian within one hundred and fifty miles, nor anybody,

as all will be on the trap lines and we won't see a soul till spring. Yet I don't dread it. Yesterday a large wolf — and they are immense — came within three hundred yards of our tent. From the ground to the top of the middle of their back is thirty-six inches. Take a yard-stick and measure the biggest dog you know and you 'll get some idea of them. Some are black and some are gray and some are mixed. The bounty is eight dollars and the best skins bring twenty-five dollars. You know we are on a bend of the river. The wolves have a trail right across the neck at our back, so we can see them as they streak across. I have six wolf traps and I shall set them out as soon as my bait is rotten enough. It takes an awful stink to lure them to your traps, unless you have a dead horse or something to set your traps around. The largest wolves stand as high as forty inches to the back up here. I have n't got a decent rifle for them. Nothing but old muzzle loaders that Daddy's forefather used in the Revolutionary War and a good little 22 rifle.

If I can get them once into a trap, I 'll kill them with a club and "shabby-nacky" myself a good 30.30 rifle. Shabby-nacky means "trade" in here. The only white people to

come "in" this year besides us were two priests to take the place of two old priests going "out." One at the Catholic Mission and one at the English Church Mission. So we are very well known by hundreds of breeds and savages, as they have what I call "moccasin telegraph" service here. It travels very fast by moccasin and canoe. If someone gets a new dog we all know it and all about it very quickly. Our dog is known to hundreds that have never seen it.

To save my candles I am writing this by the stove. By taking off one lid I get a fitful light that barely enables me to see to write. It makes me think of Lincoln's early life. We are still living in a tent, but it's getting pretty cold nights. It was twenty degrees above zero in the tent last night and I won't be able to get a log cabin this year, as good logs are too far away. So we are going to take what is handy, which is poplar pole trees, and cover the tent and put a roof on it of poles and put hay and dirt on it. This pioneering is tough, all right, but I expected it, and a merry heart goes a long way. Though not a day passes that I don't question myself whether I have done right in coming so far away. But no one could help

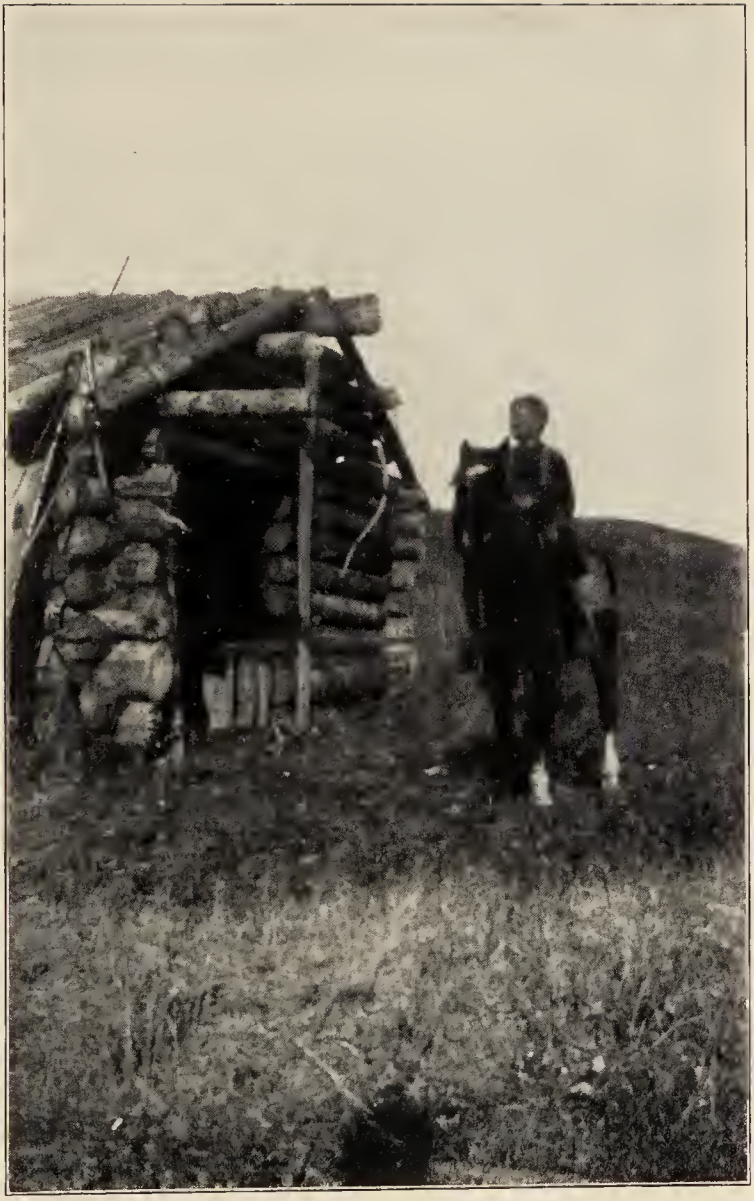
me where I was, and I wanted to keep my self-respect and raise the boy to be a real man, and I did n't have a show there.

Boy has a very small Indian pony — looks like a small Shetland pony, but has the toughness and pep so necessary down here. Our rivers flow *down* to the Arctic here. When Daddy came he stopped at the last drug store in civilization to get a box of salve. The kindly little gray-haired lady who waited on him asked him, "Whither bound?" and he said, "Fort Vermilion." "That 's my grave," said she sadly. "Why, were you ever down there?" says Daddy. "Yes, I wintahed one yeah on the Great Slave Lake." "Did n't you like it?" asked Daddy. "No," says she. "Too fah from a doctah." "Well," said Daddy, "she 's quite close to a 'doctah' now, for her husband is one and runs that little drug store."

When Boy comes riding on his pony back over the hills, now you see him, then he 's out of sight in a gully, now he 's riding up the slope, gone again, and then comes racing home on a gallop. Well, it 's like looking at a Wild-West movie show, only it 's real. He and his pony are one — all the brother he has except his big black shepherd dog. I must get some dogs, but

not this year. Only dogs are used here in winter. You lie down on your sled, wrapped in a feather quilt, and the river is the road. A trapper offered me a trained female dog, but I have too much on my hands yet awhile. A bunch of wild pups would drive me crazy. A husky is half wolf; a malamute is a husky bred back to a wolf. They make fine sled dogs, but have to be well fed or they 'll turn on you and eat you up. I have too many to feed now, but I 'll have a bunch of trained dogs after a while.

One of the breeds says he 'll take Boy out on the trap line when he gets big enough. The trap line is from one to five hundred miles off and lies over a big country where only Indians live, well watered with unknown rivers and lakes. Each trapper chooses his line, which runs through the bush along these rivers, creeks, and lakes, and he builds a cabin at the end of each day when he goes over it the first time. Six cabins is the rule. So it takes a week to go over his route, and he travels thus all winter long, back and forth. In the spring he comes out to the trading posts with his catch and trades it for what he needs or sees at the post; wastes his substance on whiskey, cards, and foolishness; goes in debt to the post for a



"Boy Has a Very Small Indian Pony"

grubstake for the next winter, and then there is the hardship and loneliness of the trap line ahead of him again.

All the talk now is "dogs" and "fur." "Saw some fur last night," says Peter R., a half-breed. "What was it?" I asked. "A big wolf, and if my horse had n't got scared I 'd 'a' shot him," he answered. The foxes are shy and you never see them. A large bear looted Jack W.'s cabin. Just tore things loose and carried off his bacon. A wolf carried off a fresh beef hide from the white settler's place two weeks ago.

That 's all the news. I have no paper from the U. S. and I wonder what they are doing there. Those clippings would be interesting — I hope you are saving them. Politics and world happenings, you know.

September 5, 1926

The silence almost gets me and I have to say to myself that the same sun shines on you. You see the same stars and moon and it 's the same old earth, only I am farther north. It helps some as I stand on this bend of the river and gaze in awe on the northern lights as they play and shake their shimmering curtains. The breeds are afraid of them and have a tradition

that they sometimes carry people away. The past two weeks I have seen only two breeds, one Indian, and one white trapper. As winter comes on I don't expect to see even that many in a month.

The Boy is changing even in the short time we have been here. He is more like a man and takes his responsibilities very seriously. He is allowed two shells each day for the "22" and is supposed to bring in one prairie chicken or rabbit each day. It usually only takes one shell. How proud he is when he comes in! I hear him whistling long before I see him and one day I heard him say to Daddy, "I guess I can keep the pot boiling for Mother." He gets lonesome, too, and I have to play with him. There is n't a breed or Indian around here but what he knows their names and all about them. They have named him "Jabbering Colt" and he thinks that 's a fine name. These silent folk find a little white boy quite amusing. To live up here far from the madding crowd, automobiles, and movies gives us a saner view of what life is and time to reflect. There is time to look at the stars and wonder at their stillness. I have been reading bedtime stories to Boy and we enjoy them very much.

And in the night I sit up sometimes and listen to some of the "little people" that hunt for crumbs in the dark. Last night one that we call Mrs. Deer Mouse fell into the water pail. I heard her swimming frantically and butting her head against its side. Poor little thing! I rushed up and emptied the pail outside on the grass and went back to sleep.

This is but a short letter, but the winter will soon be here and I 'm far from ready for it. I had intended to get us each a warm wool sweater, but decided to get two old ewes and a spinning wheel instead. I have Grandma Rose's old cards to comb the wool with and next year we 'll have good warm sweaters that I shall knit as soon as I have the wool. Besides, I 'll have the lambs. We can get along with what we have this winter. I have to look ahead to the many winters that are coming. There is plenty of hay and I 'm going to utilize it. The tent is already cold at night, so I can't sit up any longer, as my feet get so cold. My tallow candle is getting low, and so good night.

September 6, 1926

My conscience is troubling me very much. I tried to doctor a sick soul and gave a sedative

instead of using the surgical knife. The white settler has a dear little daughter, just twenty-two years old. I never thought I 'd find a woman smaller than I, but this girl is, and so pretty and sweet. They grow that way up here in the woods. I mean, sweet. All the young girls are that way. Their eyes are shy and timid and I could n't hurt them. The white settler has so many kids, and the girls range in age from ten to twenty-three and there are seven unmarried and all are just as I have described them. M. is the one that haunts my wakeful hours at night. Which reminds me of a verse in the Bible, which says, if I remember right, "The poor are always with us." For M. told me the first day I met her, "The breeds are here, and we must accept them and treat them like human beings." Daddy said the same and we are doing it.

All breeds are not alike, but the big majority have strong backs and weak heads. Among the exceptions is one named N. That 's his first name. He is nearly white, tall, very strong, and would pass for a Frenchman "outside." But here he 's just a breed, and among his fellows looks like one. He has always worked at the ranch and played with the chil-

dren as he grew up, and fell in love with M. Her parents have forbidden her to ever think of marriage with a breed. M. has refused eight white trappers, to share their cabins, and I don't blame her. I have n't seen one yet as nice as N. Yes, he wipes the dishes for her every day and they look anywhere except at each other when anyone is looking, but when they 're alone blue eyes look at soft black eyes. He eats with the breeds at their table and this little act of wiping the dishes is his one happy moment after each meal.

I wish you could see them together. So happy and yet so unhappy. Then one day M. broke down and cried and told me. And I comforted her, assuring her everything would come out all right and that N. was a very good man. I could n't bear to see her cry and I forgot that she will have breed children if she marries N. My sympathy made me do wrong. For I don't want breed grandchildren myself. I can't think of anything more horrible than to have grandchildren with strong backs and weak heads. For breeds are just big children. If I had expressed my horror at such a union as she contemplates, my conscience would be clear

and I 'd feel like a brute. What shall I do? Just let nature take its course? Am I, a woman from the "outside" and well informed, responsible for this? She said she was going to marry him or die an old maid.

It 's too bad that we are fifteen miles from the white settler. Karl gets so lonesome for children. I play with him some, but it 's not the same. He knows the name of every breed around here and quite a few Indians. He has also made a friend of the Mounted Police, a rather young-looking man with a splendid appearance, as if he had just stepped out of a storybook. But they lead a very strenuous life here, protecting the white settler and keeping the Indians peaceful. There is only one at each fort and their days are full of danger, and braver men never lived. The Mounted Policeman has told Karl many stories of his own exploits and of another who was his partner a few years back, but got shot by a murderer who was quicker on the trigger than he was that time.

Full many a league o'er prairie wild
Our trackless path must be,
And round it roam the fiercest tribes
Of Blackfeet and of Cree;

But danger from their savage bands
Our dauntless heart disdains,
That heart which bears the helmet up
Of the Riders of the Plains.

We bear no lifted banner,
The soldier's care and pride;
No waving flag leads onward
Our horsemen when they ride.
The sense of duty well discharged
All idle thoughts sustains;
No other spur to action need
The Riders of the Plains.

So among uneducated, silent Indians, child-like breeds, and trappers of the fur, Boy's life will be spent. But already I see a change in him. He is more manly, more to be depended on. He realizes that we are in a new, wild country and that I depend on him to make a home here and provide the necessities of life.

The silence almost gets me. For two weeks I have n't seen a white person, and we, Boy and I, have been alone. Daddy had to appear in person at the nearest land office to file on our homestead and he left us on the twenty-seventh of August. He will most likely be back the end of this week. Boy and I have been so lonely without him. But the law has to be complied with, and by homesteading himself, if he

should die before Boy is of age, I also get a homestead, besides the right to prove up his homestead should he die before it is proved up or after. He is very anxious for Boy to get a good farm and enough to pasture stock on. It 's possible to get half a section, besides Boy's homestead, right at eighteen years of age this way. I think that Daddy will be with us a good many years yet, but he does n't think so, though I tell him that "creaking hinges last a long time."

You can't get a breed or an Indian to live alone. They are the most childish and superstitious mortals I 've ever heard of. Their fears simply get them. "What are you afraid of?" I ask them. "I don't know" is all the answer I get, or "I won't stay alone — I can't."

My health is better here and Karl is growing so fast I can just see him grow, and he is just as chubby. So the climate so far agrees with us. I hope you are well, too, and happy.

October 25, 1926

This will be just a few lines to let you know that I 'm well and we 're all feeling good. Winter is here, snow on the ground, and we are still in a tent, but building on our cabin. It 's not

very cold, except in spells, and I have a heater up besides the old cookstove. There is no soul closer than seven miles — not even an Indian. All are away on their trap lines.

We had fish for supper last night and prairie chicken for dinner. Just as a battle looks more terrible to those far away than to the one in the fray, so this must look that way to you. It 's pioneering, I 'll say, but I think we 'll winter through all right. I do wish we had a house and barn, but will dig away at it and by next winter we 'll have it. I have a roof over the kitchen stove and three walls to that, but have to cut lots of logs yet for the rest. Old winter will be a snorter in another month and I must go to work again. Can't wait a minute.

Thank you for the paper. The mail is a bright spot in our life, a window to look out on the big "outside." The river is n't running ice yet, but will any day, and then the mail will be once a month and I may not be able to get it regular, as it 's over thirty miles away and I have no dog team. I saw a dog team this week. A trapper passed through with five dogs. I gave him his dinner and then I kissed each of his dogs on the forehead and hugged them and cried a little over them. He vowed

he 'd never whipped them and I told him right to his face he was a liar. Such beautiful dogs, and their hearts were broken; their tails turned down and slicked tight to their stomachs at the sound of his voice.

This country is "hell" for dogs and Indians. The Indians are in the grip of the fur traders and are robbed terribly, and just starve along, always in debt to the traders. And the traders just hate white settlers and manage to keep them out. We are the only ones to come in this year. Those that came before have most of them gone out again, but I intend to stick. If I get through this winter I 'll make it. It 's a wonderful country, a bracing climate, and I love it.

The fairy-tale book and *Robinson Crusoe* have been a godsend for Boy. Just what he needed for his mind. He has his sled and a hill to slide on, a dog to play with, and he is getting to be an expert with the big axe. Much better than I am. Well, it 's going to be a hard time for me for a while, but I 'm game. So much is at stake.

October 25, 1926

Thank you for your nice and encouraging letter. I feel better every time I read it.

"Boy Is Getting To Be an Expert with the Big Axe"

Winter is almost here and she 'll be a snorter when she comes with the thermometer never above 40 all winter. I am just half-ready. I am building of poplar logs (green) and we are still in a tent, but I have a small cellar hole for my vegetables in the tent and a large heater besides the cookstove. It 's a slow job for us three alone to get ready for winter. Daddy is so frail. There are two white settlers here; one lives seven miles away and one fifteen miles away, but both too busy to bother with us. We are alone in the wilderness now. The breeds and Indians are gone to their trap lines far away, for fur is scarce here by the river. I have n't had time to trap any yet, but I think I 'll get enough fur to buy what groceries I 'll use next year. I can't trap far away, as I have no dog team. It 's a new trade, too, and I have much to learn.

The *Atlantics* reached me safely and I have them with me and read some every day. It is so still and lonesome, no human beings, no autos, no whistle or noise. But Boy is happy here, works with a will and whistles cheerfully, Daddy sings his old Scotch ballads and "Annie Laurie," and it 's worth a lot to have him happy. The world is hard when you 're down

and out, wherever you are. This winter will be bad, but if we get through, it will be better every year after that. With no one but ourselves to talk to, one gets hungry for reading and it 's so hard not to have any. So I appreciate more than ever I can tell the magazines you sent.

I have seen some wolves, but their fur is n't worth anything. If you take a tape line and measure forty inches from the floor you 'll know how tall they are from the ground to the middle of the back. They are immense up here. Daddy met one in broad daylight, but he was n't hungry and Daddy had forgotten his gun.

December 29, 1926

Now I shall tell you about my dear little House at the foot of the hill. It 's so warm and cozy. No wind blows on it. The sun shines in all day long, for it faces the south. When I go out, I always say "Good-bye, little House," and greet it when I open the door with "Hullo, darling House." So much happiness there in that little House. You see, I know full well what it means not to have even such a little home.

By the time I had found a location and set up the tents, hauled my boxes fifteen miles through the wilderness, it was fall. We planned to have a dugout like Lincoln's father built the first winter, and there was just the right place for it where the upland made a sheer drop of thirty feet to the lowland that fringes the river. An ideal location for the dugout, and we were so happy over it. Then along comes an old trapper and tells us it is n't safe. That the river bend sometimes has ice jams, and that the water will rise over this bank several feet. Then we started a log cabin. All the spruce grows on the other side of the river, so we had to use poplar for house logs. They are short, limby, and crooked, and we had to hunt for good trees at quite a distance. Time flew on wings; we had twenty-six cut when the cold came and Daddy took one of his poorly spells. To build a cabin was out of the question, so we began to lay the logs around the tent. By building a wall around it, the tent would be warmer. And if it ever grew high enough we would put on a pole roof and cover it with hay and dirt.

It never got that far. Eight logs were laid when winter came. Such freezing cold! The

big wood heater in the tent and the old cook-stove had to be kept red-hot to get any comfort at all, and my poor feet were so cold. A tent is such a draughty place to live in, when it gets 40 degrees below zero. We put on all the clothes we had. Eat — say, how we did eat! Five and six meals in twenty-four hours, and still we lost flesh. The cold just seemed to freeze the meat off your bones. Daddy suffered worst from the cold. All we did was get wood and eat. Boy and I did the chores, fed the horses, and milked the cow. The thermometer dropped steadily. Do you wonder why I did n't write, now? It was my job to keep the fire going at night and that 's the finest training my brain has ever received. I 'll say it took all the grit I had to get up out of a warm bed into that iciness to start the fire. Invariably I 'd sleep until it was entirely out and my nose began to freeze.

Thanksgiving Day came, and just at dusk four loaded sleds drove up to the tent. The white settler had rustled up three white men and a breed and had brought everything with him to build a cabin. They were cold and hungry and had walked for fifteen miles beside their loads to keep from freezing. Grandma Rose's

big black iron kettle was on the stove half-full of soup. I had little dabs of food in the cupboard, frozen rice, beans, etc. Into the soup they went till the kettle was full. It made a grand mulligan. Such a jolly crew when they got outside of bowlfuls of hot soup! They had bread and cold boiled potatoes with them, frozen solid. The bread went into the oven and the potatoes, too, to thaw out. Soon they each had a plate of hash that I made from the soup meat and the potatoes. By the time that was disposed of, my prunes were cooked and they had hot prune sauce to finish up on with toasted bread. The white settler said, "Gosh, boys, this was sure unexpected — a three-course dinner." It was so crowded in the tent — just barely room to squeeze in, sitting wherever they could, on the trunk, two on the wood, but all so jolly and joking and laughing. Then they unloaded and pulled out for the place they were going to camp, two miles away.

They were back before daylight next morning. Some of the teams hauled wood for fires, some logs. As soon as the fires thawed the ground, two of the men dug a small cellar, while the others laid logs for the foundation. My hands were full cooking for them. At ten o'clock I

sent Boy out to them with tea and hot biscuits. It was so bitterly cold, they needed something warm in their stomachs. Their eyelashes were tiny icicles, their eyebrows white with frost. Often I 'd hear a yelling and ki-yiing and run out to see what was up, and there they were solemnly dancing a war dance around the fire to get warm, letting out unearthly yells. In their moccasins and Arctic clothing, they sure looked like Indians. Boy warmed nails, tools, and gloves for them and was very important indeed. It was 49 degrees below the third day, and they were heroes to stay with it. I did all I could to help. Besides two hot meals in the tent, I sent out hot tea and hot biscuits both morning and afternoon. They got their own breakfast. On Saturday they voted whether to keep Sunday or not, and it was unanimous that they should keep at it until they got us into a house. On the sixth day they moved us in and even unboxed and set up my dear old piano. It turned as white as snow with frost and I wiped and wiped it for hours. Those blessed men even left me a nice pile of wood all cut and ready to burn.

The last day the white settler was telling us about a white woman who rode one hundred and

fifty miles with two small children in a dog sled when a blizzard was blowing. She had to get to the Fort to be confined at the Catholic Mission. I said, "That sure took nerve. I don't believe I could ever do that." "Talk about nerve," said he, "why, you 've got her beat, wintering in a tent when its 50 degrees below zero." But he was mistaken. That does n't take any more nerve than breaking through the ice in the river. With either one you have a pretty cold time, that 's all. But it does beat all how heavenly a little one-room shack can be. It has a tar-paper roof and three windows. The sun shines brightly in and lights up the pictures on the walls. A darling little house, and I 'm so happy.

I always think of Mrs. W. when I write to you, because now that I 've seen her she seems so real. She 'll understand that I write to her too.

January 18, 1927

Just think, I 've been to a party. A real party, and it seems just too good to be true; and a year from now there 'll be another one. But first I must tell you about the Preacher, because he enters so much into our lives. The English Church sends us one missionary and we

call him "the Preacher." The old one was pensioned and sent to England the week we arrived here. He thought he could ride his circuit as usual and the result was he was found wandering in a muskeg, by the Indians. He had started out with a sandwich in his pocket and no mosquito bar, and when found was out of his head. It 's no trouble to get lost here at all. I never venture over a quarter of a mile from home without the dog. When I want to go home I tell him to go ahead and show me the way. Our new Preacher is just out of college. He 's a dandy — real good-looking, young, jolly. Can sing a rollicking college song or dance a jig. He is very modern, immaculately dressed, and rides like all Englishmen — bumpety-bump. It looks so unnatural. We enjoy his visits very much and he has called four times already. There are so few here that it does n't take long to get around.

No, the teacher got cold feet at the last minute and would n't come. She was a strong, husky Scotch woman, and if she 'd come we 'd have got along fine and got our cabins built.

Yes, I read your proposition of the irrigated land; I know all about truck, fruit, and apples and the marketing of it, too. It sounds nice,

but when you can't sell what you raise, what then? Freight rates are so high that the selling price of the stuff won't cover it. There are no markets in the West. Some day I 'll tell you of five years spent on an irrigated ranch. I 'm grateful for the offer, but never again will I crawl on my belly for nothing.

February 9, 1927

There are just 131 civilized in here. By "civilized" I mean speaking English and wearing clothes. Of these, thirty-one are white, and I can count the white women on my fingers. The Preacher is a mine of information. He likes us and is delighted to think we are really settling here. We sometimes talk about the "Bonny Lassie" left in England and the aged mother who won't sell her antique and cherished old furniture and silver because she 's keeping it to move right into the "Vicarage" when he becomes "the vicar" of the little village church. He loves the freedom here and says he can't go back to the narrow life of the English vicar. The Bonny Lassie is planning on coming here this summer. Won't that be fine? Pretty rough on this gentle English girl to live amongst Indians and trappers, but I know she and I

will be the best of friends and she 's a brick if she comes. It 's a self-imposed exile for me and will be for her, too. Love for your mate makes you daring, but it has its compensations.

February 11, 1927

These civilized people are scattered over a couple of thousand square miles. Many live in teepees and the rest in log cabins, except two or three who have board cabins. Mr. S.'s house was built by his father forty years ago of boards sawed with a handsaw. Some labor.

He gives a party once a year after Xmas. The Preacher was so afraid we would n't go that he came after us. It 's hard to find the trail in the snow and it 's a perfect maze to me, but we arrived at 7 P.M. and after a hot supper the S. children gave their school programme of music, recitations, songs, and dances. They have a big school-house in the back yard and the eldest daughter teaches them. After the programme the dining room and big kitchen were cleared for dancing. Everybody was there except five and the Catholic Mission.

The white women were elderly — wives who had followed their husbands in here. Old-fashioned, unbobbed, and with long skirts. But

it was like coming home, so warm was the welcome I received from this lonesome sisterhood. They held my hands so long; they did n't want to let them go. They were nearly all from the States. One had gone insane — not very bad; you could see her mind was shattered. You know it takes some mental calibre to come in here and live alone and not see a white woman more than once or twice a year. If you have n't much in your head the lonesomeness will get you. This woman is from the cotton fields of Texas. She knows nothing but work. I questioned her about her life here in order to learn what I could of the loneliness that makes insanity among sheep herders and farm women.

I see by one of your letters that you have no conception of how far north I am. Calgary is a large city crowded with cars. Farther north is Edmonton, also a big city. Next comes Peace River, a small town at the end of the railroad. It has some autos and two wooden hotels. Each hotel has a bathroom in it, but you have to carry your water up from the creek and heat it on the kitchen range if you want to take a bath. Then I went on a steamer that holds thirty carloads of freight in the bottom. We went north all the way until we came to the

Great Slave Lake Region. We got off south of this region in the wilderness. There are no autos in here. There are nine white people at Fort Vermilion, J. P., doctor, Mounted Police, Hudson Bay man, and so forth. Get a map and find the Great Slave Lake. A little south of it — that 's here. Boy has already had two invitations from Indians to go trapping with them there when he gets a bit older.

The Calgary, Edmonton, and Peace River Town districts are settled with farms till it looks like a checkerboard. Here is the primeval wilderness. Unless I have the dog with me I never dare go out of sight of the house, as I get lost so easily. The white settler's wife and children have to climb a tree quite frequently when picking berries to see in what direction to go home. As there are no roads in the sea, so there are none here.

February 12, 1927

I have now been in bed one week. Last night was a good night and I feel rested and easy to-day. Just a week ago I fell, striking my back on a small bag of frozen salt in the tent. I walked back to my little house, undressed, and crept into bed, and there I 've been ever since. It will be two weeks yet before I can walk. I

found the hurt place in the *Anatomy*. The hurt is on the right side.

I lie on my left side. To-day Daddy raised me up in a reclining position, which feels very nice. Boy is the cook, and by following my directions does real well and bakes good bread. Sets his sponge at night just like any good housekeeper. There does n't seem to be anything out of joint and we 're so far from a doctor that at a dollar a mile the price is prohibitive unless something is really broken. The Indians are doctored free, but not white people. Doctors should be free to all people. I 'll never have another doctor's bill hanging over me if I can get well without. So tired I won't write any more now.

February 27, 1927

Just when I needed it so badly, comes your good news. Your letter came February 20. Had a fall and have to lie still in bed till it heals. Daddy's poorly too, but can still putter around. I fell the fifth of February and sprained something in my back, but won't be paralyzed and in due time walk again. What worried me was that I had such bad luck catching fur. Fur migrates; they follow the rabbits, and the Indians follow right along into the interior,

which I cannot do. It 's wild enough here, when I dare not go out of sight of the cabin without the dog to show me the way home. It 's so easy to get lost in the bush, and who is there that can find you? The fur is gone and won't be back for three years, say the Indians. The rabbits get so thick they eat up all your haystacks if you don't fence them in tight with poles. They swarm in thousands around the stacks. But you don't mind, for you are too busy getting fur. As the rabbits get too thick, lack of feed or cold gives them a contagious sickness and soon all are dead. The fur leaves, that fed on them. It takes seven years for them to come back. Last winter there was n't a rabbit here. But they are coming back. Moccasin telegrams tell the glad tidings. In three years there will be fur.

February 28. — What has worried me is that with no fur there would be no grubstake for next winter. Until your letter came I just lay there planning and worrying about how to manage. It looked bad, but I had it figured out that with a good garden and wild fowls and fish we 'd do without what we could n't get. Potatoes and milk is n't a bad living. The things we needed would just have to wait.

March 1. — Feeling real cheerful, though still in bed. The air-mail letter is under my pillow. I never thought you 'd ever sell those old letters. So I never asked about them, as I felt so sorry for you because you 'd be so disappointed after trying so hard. It 's hard to write, as I can't sit up yet. My back is most well, but I got shook up inside and that 's what keeps me a little bit ill. Soon be well now.

March 9. — Have been poorly for a week, but better again. Still in bed. It was an odd experience to read those old letters in print and live the old days over again. The March number will come in the next mail. We 're supposed to get mail every month, but the weather does not permit it. The first mail took forty days to get in and fifty days back. He had to cut a new trail, had much trouble, broke through the ice crossing Battle River. So we get just three mails in eight months.

March 10. — Slow work gaining strength. Can't walk yet. Sometimes a breed or an Indian comes in to get warm and get a cup of tea. They 're very shy. There 's poor old Peter. We feel so bad about the breeds. They want to be white and are truly grateful when you treat them right. The piano lay outside in

the snow in its box until the cabin was done. Peter said one day, "I 've never touched a piano, but I know I could play it." He plays the violin by ear. These breeds are great for music. So when Peter came to see me when I got hurt, I remembered and coaxed him to play for me. With his swarthy face and long black hair almost touching the keys as he laboriously coaxed a tune with one long finger — well, he was a picture. He was so serious. The tunes came, "Old Black Joe," "Annie Laurie," and the last was "Home, Sweet Home." He stood up proud while I told him, "I knew you could do it." When he went, he stood in the door a moment, gave a long look at the old piano, then at me. "I wish I had a piano an' a lil' white girl," he said.

When he 'd gone, Daddy said, "Poor breeds," and then, with still more feeling, "Poor dam breeds." Which is rather strong for Daddy, but he does sympathize with them. He always speaks of them as "my poor breeds." They all call him "Dad." The next day Manny came and I knew he wanted to play for me, too. Peter must have boasted — they always do. Manny did n't need much coaxing. With one finger he played the "Prisoner's Song" and

"That Tumbledown Shack." He was proud when I said delightedly, "Oh, Manny, where did you ever learn them?" He had heard them on the phonograph at the white settler's. I 'm sitting up now.

March 11. — Still in bed. I 'll surely be up next week. Anyway I 'm happy and don't mind like I did. 'T is n't every invalid has an airship letter under their pillow. A picture hangs over my bed of "Custer's Last Stand" in colors. I assure you it 's a "remarkable" painting. I did it myself, because Daddy wanted it. I 'm not a real artist, but before I was married I daubed. Anyway, in here it 's a wonderful picture. Its fame has gone far and wide by moccasin telegrams. It 's a shrine now, and by next summer there won't be an Indian or breed in here who has n't made a pilgrimage to it. I have enjoyed it so. They 're stoics, but, looking up, I can see a gleam of satisfaction in their eyes. "The redskins are winning, the white men are doomed." Just that little gleam in their eyes, just the look, shows me that the breed is after all more red than white.

I am alone a great deal, but not lonely. There 's a timid knock at the door. I call out,

"Come in," and a swarthy Indian marches up to my bed, his eyes on that picture. Often they don't see me, I believe. But after a while I tell the story of Custer and how they were all killed. "But not scalped; he was too brave to scalp," I say. That last may not be true, but I hope it is. It seems such a pity to scalp that brave figure.

March 12. — Sitting in the old rocking-chair now. It seems too good to be true. What a good old world it is after all. And I walked a few steps. Now I 'll get strong fast.

(*Afternoon*) The young doctor has just been here. Quite a drive for the laddie, sixty miles with a cold north wind blowing. He came on his own hook. I would n't send for a doctor unless I were dying. Well, he says my back is going to be all right, that my kidney is not well yet, all of which I knew already. Gave me many varieties of pills, and then we had a nice long visit, while he told me of college days. He said he is out all the time, there is so much sickness among the Indians. White man's food, clothes, and vices weaken the red man and when he gets sick he 's very much sicker than a white man. It 's a strenuous life, but he likes it better than the city, he said.

March 1, 1927

Still in bed, but better. Next week I 'll be up again. It was a slight sprain and much bruised. Daddy is baking meat and potatoes for our lunch. Boy is in bed with acute bronchitis. Running out while warm into the cold without a coat must have caused it, but Daddy is bringing him around in good shape. He smokes him every day for the cough. Pours oil of pine tar on hot coals and makes him breathe the smoke. It loosens the cough up fine.

The Party. The Preacher said, "Now you 'll see some fancy clothes." "What! Do they wear fancy clothes?" said I. "The Duskies do," says he. As I had only met one Indian squaw all summer, I looked forward to seeing the others. I received the surprise of my life. He calls the Indian and breed women "the Duskies." They were dressed in the latest fashion. Knee-length gowns, bobbed hair, flesh-colored silk stockings with bright flowers embroidered on the knees. Their gowns were of bright silk, and they were so painted and powdered the men looked black in comparison. Dancing the breakdown they grew so excited that Cree and Beaver war whoops made

my back hair rise up in horror. I thought they 'd start scalping next, but a glance across the room at the gleaming pistols and full cartridge belt of the Mounted Police reassured me. Nearly all had come in dog sleds.

My little house. I love it. There is only one room in it, but I would n't trade it for a mansion. I could n't make a dugout in the hill, so then I started a log cabin. Eight logs were laid when the cold came. Such a cold! The thermometer dropped steadily and we all cut wood to keep from freezing to death in the tent. We put up the big heater, but had to wear our coats to keep the cold from our backs. We lived from day to day. Building was out of the question. The intense cold just made the meat on our bones vanish away, and we ate all the time, all we could.

Thanksgiving Day came, and just at dusk Mr. S. drove up with four teams and sleds loaded and three other white men and one breed. They brought everything with them and, with the thermometer at forty below zero, put up my little house in six days and had us moved in. I fed them. They could just get in around the stove, but they were a jolly crew. They made big fires outside to get warm by.

The icicles hung from their eyelashes in the intense cold, and they danced war dances around the fires and whooped to get warm. Mr. S. has a small saw outfit and saws lumber, and he brought odds and ends he had on hand. The foundation was logs and they even dug me a small cellar. I shall pay for the material and time, of course. But it was queer how they arrived just in the nick of time. Daddy was in bed for a week in the little house just from the cold. Nothing the matter with him at all. The cold grew worse until it was forty-nine below by my thermometer and sixty below by self-registering ones. Was n't I glad we had a shelter at last!

Been feeling blue because I had no luck trapping, nearly sick with worry, when like a bolt from the blue came good news and a check! Look in the February number of the *Atlantic Monthly* in the back in the Contributors' Column. "It can't be true," I say to myself a dozen times a day. Mrs. W. sent my letters in to the magazine and they accepted them. I can't believe it. A grubstake for the coming winter; able to pay my debts and buy some clothes for Boy, right out of the blue sky!

The piano was never unpacked and the last thing the men did was to set it up in the little house.

Perhaps you have already seen the *Atlantic*. I received the February number and the check February 20. I did n't fret any more about staying in bed. Your letter and package came on that day, too, and Boy's book and all the reading for me. You are too good. How can I ever pay it back! Everybody is too good to me.

March 3, 1927

Your Christmas letter came on February 20. It was about the blackest hour of my life. I had had no luck getting fur, as this is not a fur year, and won't be until the rabbits come back. They get so thick they swarm in the thousands, and then get a disease and die, all in a few weeks. The foxes, minks, etc., are thick then, and when the rabbits die they disappear. The rabbits are due now in three years. Moccasin telegrams tell the glad news that they are coming in here, and in three years we will have fur. Then, to cap the climax of bad luck, I had a fall and sprained my hip where it joins the backbone. After three and a half weeks on my back, I am sitting up. Your

letter was a ray of sunshine breaking through the clouds.

Boy has acute bronchitis, and lies beside me in the bed. Kids always are foolish and run out when they 're warm, to cool off. He 's getting along nicely, but is pretty sick. Daddy has his hands full, but is well. I think I can walk next week. I peel potatoes now and help what I can, and darn socks and mittens; but I have n't been off the bed yet and can't sit up long at a time. Daddy thinks one bone was cracked a little too; but I 'm thankful it 's no worse, and that I 'll soon be up. And now I can have a garden, for I have money for seeds!

March 14, 1927

I was afraid you might worry about me, so I 'll write a few lines to tell you that the young doctor was out to see me and he examined my back and said it would be all right, but that one kidney was still sore. He left me a heap of pills of many colors, which I won't take. The Government furnishes us a doctor and this lad is a dear child just out of college. He is very busy and has a hard row to hoe up here doctoring Indians. I did n't send for him, for I can't afford such luxuries. He came anyway.

I guess the breeds must have told him I 'd never walk again. I can't walk much yet, but I take a few steps every day now. We had a nice visit and he told me all about college days. It was real nice of him to come sixty miles with a cold north wind blowing, but he said that was nothing. He often went one hundred and fifty miles when it was colder. Some life.

April 15, 1927

You know, I just wondered if some of the friends of the past years would see the letters and write to me. Then came a hard year when I despaired and quit writing to everybody. I received only one Xmas card that year and it was from a little crippled old woman who is now past ninety. She just would n't quit writing, and so for a while I used to write her about twice a year. She begged me to keep on, and said she 'd save the letters, and then some day when I went to college I could find the nucleus of many a story there. I lost my good old father — troubles and sorrow till I nearly gave up. I had nothing cheerful to tell or say, so I quit writing. But this little old lady persisted. So I kept on with my diary to please her.

Two years ago a younger woman dropped in to see the old lady and read some of the letters. She thought they had literary value and asked me if she could offer them to a magazine. She got the permission and I gave it no more thought, as I did n't believe for a minute she could ever induce a magazine to print them. They don't amount to much. Just the struggle for existence on a farm. People reading it will think I was having a very bad time of it and only I, when to tell the truth I got along better than my neighbors because I studied nutrition, and while at times some elements were lacking, on the whole my family were better nourished than theirs. It was hard enough and is yet, but I saw so many go down in the struggle or pull out for the city when they were unfitted for it. I can't live in the city on account of not being strong and afraid of T. B., so when my turn came to go I managed to get to Alberta. I won't go into the details of my first winter here. I 'm through, or almost through. There are ups and downs as usual. One thing I 'm sure of — plenty of hardships ahead in this vast wilderness. Boy has gone out to try to get a wild duck for the pot. He is ten years old this month. The wild ducks just arrived last night

and will be our main food now for a while. I was so glad to see them. I have a one-room cabin in a bend of the river, but well above high water.

The pony died of old age. I have picked up two Indian ponies for me and the Boy. Small ponies can be had here for very little. But most of them buck. Boy's does n't but mine is a snorter. Her name is Dolly and Boy's is Pete. Mine is a buckskin and I have never ridden her. A halfbreed cowboy is coming on Sunday to take the buck out of her before I try riding her.

April 29, 1927

I am up and around — not so very strong. Four inches of snow fell last night and it 's still snowing, but it will go as soon as the wind changes. As soon as the ice goes out the mail will come in. I hope it goes soon. I am planning a vegetable garden and am going to farm all I can. The summer is short, but it 's almost continuous daylight and things do grow. I feel lonesome to-day and wish there were some other woman to talk to besides the one in the looking-glass. I 'm not well enough to be outside and I 'm tired of the inside. The mail will be so welcome.

May 4, 1927

We 're expecting the boat this week with mail. I feel better — have *it* checked again. Spring is here, and birds. It 's so lovely it hurts. Ducks and geese and frogs make the air noisy, and birds everywhere. I am so happy.

May 19, 1927

The mail came in two days ago and I have a chance maybe to mail this card as the boat goes back. I 'll try, anyway. Medicine came, and just what I needed. My back is nearly well. I only feel it when I stoop over. I 'm late with my garden and so busy. Had a heap of letters. Books and papers all arrived. The B. cape kept Daddy's head from freezing all winter. He even took it to bed with him. We have a fresh cow this month and lots of milk.

May 21, 1927

Spring is here at last and the grass is green. Flowers are springing up everywhere and wild strawberries are in bloom. There was quite a severe frost a couple of nights ago that may have injured them. The mosquitoes are also with us now. If this land ever gets settled up they won't be bad, but as it is now they are

fierce. We sleep under a mosquito bar at night, made of cheesecloth so the little ones can't crawl through. They will stay with us now until fall comes with sharp frost. But they are bearable. Summer seems to come as if by magic. There really is hardly any spring. To-day is Sunday, I believe. I am never sure of the days in the calendar. I studied the Bible a bit and found that the word "hell" means "the grave" in many places in the Bible. I have heard people call this north country by both these names, but I need never do that now that people outside know I 'm here. I feel as if I have known all you folks all along, but you did n't know about me.

The weeks and months and years slip by and the old struggle for existence goes on. It 's been a fight to keep the intellect alive. Do you think I 'll ever be able to write for a living? I can devote a little time every day to study even when I am busy with the garden, and during the long winter there is too much time on my hands. The dark comes too quickly and then stays so long.

What a lovely place I have for a home! The river forms a perfect half circle around us, and there is a hill behind us that shuts out the

north wind. The homestead is flooded below the hill until June. It makes fine hay. On one side is a small lake that never goes dry. About eighty acres large. We are all alone.

I was counting on catching fur, and there is n't any and won't be for three years — if I can exist till then. I must write, for, while I hope to grow most of what we eat, we need to buy some things and freights are so high in here.

I find that I am treated with great respect by the men in here. That 's because they admire a woman who 'll follow her man into the wilderness and stay with him. They look tough, but inside they 're homesick for some old mother, and always, of course, with the longing for a woman's sympathy and love, which is the gnawing hunger of lonely men.

The trappers are coming out of the bush on their way to the trading posts or to the "outside." Their sleeping bags are filled with duck feathers and quilted. It 's really just a large comforter; and they roll up in them and sleep right in the snow even when it 's sixty to seventy below zero.

I have gone back to when the world is still young. Civilization is gone and only the little band of lonesome women here remember it.

I have a pretty little buckskin Indian pony, but have n't dared to ride yet, as my back is still a little lame. But it is passing away and I am getting stronger every day.

May 21, 1927

Your letters and cards and papers all came this week on the boat. I just have to gain weight and I 'll be strong. The grass is green and I wish I could eat it like a cow. I 'm so hungry for something green or raw. Beans and potatoes get so trying that I wish sometimes I 'd never see any again. I must investigate the vegetation that is springing up and see if something won't be good for greens.

I was swamped with letters this last mail, nearly all asking me if I needed something to read. I am wading through them slowly with short replies. Two enclosed money, making $30 in cash, so I could get something I wanted, they said. I hired a passing trapper with this money to help me with some heavy work getting my garden ready. While I 'm feeling real well and my back does n't bother me, only when I stoop, still my former strength is n't back. But it will come.

I laid the book for Boy away till winter. He

is more advanced in some ways than most children of his age and I read many grown-up books to him. We will enjoy your book together.

That mail certainly worries everybody. Why, we had only three mails in eight months. And I mail my letters with any pair of moccasins that happen by, whether going or coming. Their fate is then in the lap of the gods. I trust you get them sometime.

The book you speak of will perhaps come on the next boat. It was thoughtful of them to think of Boy. He 's my greatest problem. To educate him in a wilderness. Books are certainly a great help. All the papers and things you mention arrived safely. Have n't had time to look at them yet. Our summer is so short I must hurry.

I am using already of the check for food and seed. It does n't go far in here. So I must try to write. I am taking a course in short-story writing too. I sent in the first three lessons on the boat and want to do the next two lessons this week if I get time. It 's going to be a bit hard for me, as I have n't access to a library, and except for the Bible and *Æsop's Fables* I have none of the books mentioned in the course.

I believe I 'll just substitute some authors I do have and tell about them.

P.S. I found some greens.

May 22, 1927

I think the reason Boy gets his bird is because he won't shoot until he is sure he can hit it. He is a very deliberate youngster and seldom gets excited. Also he has learned his gun; it shoots a little to one side and he allows for that. He has filed a mark on it to show how much. His dog is too old to teach new tricks and hates the water. When the ducks take to deep water, Boy is out of luck. Thank you for the magazines. It 's like getting someone to talk to. One thing that isolation brings in excess is introspection. Too much of it is bad for anyone.

I feel as if I have known you all along, but you just did n't know about me. The weeks and months and years slipped by and the old struggle for existence goes on. It 's been a fight to keep the intellect alive and a fight not to grow bitter. The world has no use for a quitter, I knew, and still less for a human being grown bitter. There is nothing in this Robinson Crusoe existence to mar the landscape nor break the stillness. In

your travels you see so many cars, so much rush, and hear so much noise. And you see so many people. The shrill notes of the thousands of small frogs — they are all small — and the hum of the mosquitoes are my music to-night. But it 's broad daylight and the sun is shining when I turn in, and the sun is high when I get up. There is only a twilight for a short time at night during the summer. But the winter reverses it. Then we have long nights and bitter cold. I must try to get an extra layer of something on the cabin. The wind gets through, and when it 's cold here it 's cold. Often 70 and more below zero. It will depend on if I can write enough and sell it before it gets too late. I am so happy over the books you mention. The winter is so long and dreary alone that books are a godsend. Without them I don't dare weather another winter in here. The loneliness gets me nervous.

But I shall study, and read, and write, and teach Boy. The time will pass eventually. I like it in here and have a very pretty homestead.

May 25, 1927

I am getting stronger day by day and will soon be as well as ever. Instead of resting I

write letters, and last night I wrote letters in my sleep. In regard to D. If you write to her old address she 'd get the letter, as she lived there so long and it 's such a small place and no doubt the postmaster knows her present address. She was a queer character — no real stamina to her. I pity her. She has been raised rich, and her mind did not get the riches that poverty brought to you and me. She used to ask the funniest questions of me. One letter, she asked what make of tractor we used. A tractor on a stump farm! Imagine it. I wonder what she is doing now. She really had a wonderful education and I admired her vocabulary. She certainly could write charming letters. I feel like a hen making muddy tracks on a paper in comparison.

The name of my hurt is sacroiliac synchondrosis. The remedy is to immobilize that joint as much as possible till the ligaments are firm again, with adhesive plaster strapped on it. I had no adhesive plaster, so I just had to lie still without moving for five weeks. After that I lay around, taking a few steps every day, for two more weeks. I am well, only feel it when I stoop, but of course I 'm careful. I have n't been on a horse yet.

I am starting in the garden and I hired a passing trapper who was going Out to help me till the next boat goes. Daddy is a great help, but he 's too old to expect much work from and it 's too hard for him.

May 31, 1927

Boy and I went hunting yesterday together for the first time this year. He got four ducks, each time he shot getting his bird. The fifth time he shot he killed his duck, but she floated out of reach and the water was too deep for him to wade in after her. He can't swim yet very well, and I can't either. Of those he brought home, two were big mallards, one was an Indian duck, and the other was a spoonbill. It 's all the meat we have and it 's very good. He is really getting to be a very good shot.

Meat is very scarce here some years and has been so for quite a few years now, the Indians say. It 's too far north and the country is so large, and wolves keep it down, too. But ducks are good as long as they last. After a while there will be prairie chickens. There are small deer here, but they are very scarce. I have never seen one. In the muskegs there are moose, but except in winter they are impassable. Bands of large wolves feed on them. It 's such

a big, wild country — big lakes, rivers, and muskegs; no trails and no people. Less than two human beings to each thousand square miles, and that means Indians, too. I won't admit out loud that I 'm lonesome, but it 's a Robinson Crusoe existence. Like being alive yet buried. Books will save my reason, and letters. Trappers tell me no white woman from the outside can stand it longer than six years. I 'll have to show them.

June 11, 1927

Now that I have been through one winter which lasted eight months, I really dread the next one. How we survived is beyond me. The daily work of getting wood, and never a stick ahead, Boy and I under the bright shimmering aurora a mile from the cabin, afraid of the wolves, only our old dog and a 22 rifle at night. Silent, brilliant, and cold. So cold we could n't eat enough to get warm, nor work fast enough. I depended on "fur" and it 's gone. No, dear heart, I 'm not as independent as I was. There is a limit to human endurance.

June 4, I drove to Fort Vermilion for the first time and it was such a treat to get out and see

The New Homestead

folks once more. Everybody seemed so glad to see me, though they were all strangers. Fort Vermilion is very small. Nine white people and a few breeds, the Hudson Bay Post and the Catholic Mission being the most important. I never thought Mrs. White would be able to sell those old letters. I wrote them all to a dear old invalid past eighty, but I have never met her. I have sorted the letters that have come into piles. One I call "Broken Hearts." They are folks who are still carrying on, whose better or worse halves are unfaithful. There must be much of it going on Outside.

June 19, 1927

It 's a lovely day and I and Boy are just going to drive fifteen miles to S. Ranch to-day. There will be services there to-day. Your packages and papers came. I do love those picture supplements. I have a cheap thermometer that I keep in the cellar all winter. Then I know that the spuds won't freeze. Those weather charts were interesting. Have you got Whitman's *Leaves of Grass?* I am studying real hard at my story course and have a big pile of letters to answer. More keep coming.

Box of books for Boy arrived to-day.

June 29, 1927

The Doctor and the Preacher use cutters mostly, but on his rounds the Doctor goes in dog sleds. It often takes two or three dog teams on his longest trips. Some to carry food for the dogs, you see. He often has to change teams when it 's very far. It 's quite a life. He is an unusually dear, sweet lad. I love the tenderness and patience of his face and picture him as an old doctor in my mind. They all like him in here. It is never too cold, never too far for him to go.

The weather papers are interesting and I have laid them in the geography where we will study them next winter, Boy and I.

You 'll see by my scribbling I am busy and have to get out to my hoeing again. I have a good cow, but need another one. Good cows are awful expensive in here. Poor ones cheap. They do fine and we are going to have lots of hay. Cows go dry that calve in the spring, so I need a fresh one in the fall. I 'm hoping to get another check by fall, though it 's only hope. The flora resembles that of Switzerland in profusion, but in kind, New England. I will botanize it next year with Boy, if I can. This country during the brief summer looks like the tropics. It 's lovely beyond dreams.

The house has no chimneys but two stovepipes stuck through the roof. It 's a mansion with a tar-paper roof and leaks fierce, but I 'll soon fix that by putting on another layer of tar paper. I have used the papers as you suggested, and also over cracks to keep out the mosquitoes. I have a screen door — homemade but effective.

[*No date*]

Just a note to let you know I 'm nearly well. A little lame in my back and not enough meat on my bones, but getting along fine and working hard every day. My garden is in and some will be good and some won't. Some won't come at all, I see, as it was all put in too late. And the sod is tough and lumpy. Each year will be better after this. I am working on a fence now. Boy cuts down long-pole trees and I limb them. It 's hot work, but I must fence a garden and a pasture.

Daddy is feeling pretty good and helps all he can. I bought another horse, as we have to break thirty acres to prove up on our homestead and the old team can't do it alone. It 's pretty hard to get started, but I guess I 'll make it. I need a pig pen, hen house, and barn. We 'll build them of logs and they won't need to be big.

I have one rooster and two hens. I went and got them last week. A settler across the river — it was forty-six miles — had taken care of them for me. I shall set the hens as soon as I get eggs enough. They are Black Jersey Giant. I like that breed. Then I want to get a pig if possible. I 'll try to get one or maybe two in the next month.

I 've got beans and dry peas and raisins for next winter ahead and I have sent out for rice, but will have to buy potatoes in here. They were put in so late I won't get any. The potatoes will cost me $40 and corn $50; a moose hide, tanned for moccasins, $18; rice for one year, $14.75. So I figure and figure over and over to plan ahead for the long winter. There is medicine to get, clothes for Boy, pants for Daddy, seed for next spring, etc. But we 'll have enough to eat, anyway, and our little house is cozy, and I have bedding. I am making three wool-filled comforters now out of my check. It 's cold here, 78 below zero once in a while, and 60 is general, so I put six pounds of wool batting in each one. One needs warm bedding. One woman I went to see last week, when I went to Fort Vermilion after my mail, had a small child freeze its nose and

cheek in bed last winter. You see wood fires go down.

I went after my mail for the first time last week, thirty-eight miles or more, and it was sure nice to get out. My first trip from home since I settled here. This is a lovely country and I like it once I get a start.

Some range horses have just been rolling on my garden. The peas were up nicely and radishes and lettuce too. It looks nice now, but they did n't spoil quite all of it. There 's some left.

July 6, 1927

The greatest event of the year in here came off on the First of July, which is Dominion Day, or what corresponds to the Fourth at home. The trading posts have for years held a rodeo for the Indians and trappers with prizes for the various sports.

Boy and I wanted to go so badly that we hitched our two little saddle ponies to the old buggy and started out without even knowing the way. What we figured on was to head in that direction and trust to luck that there would be moccasins going that way too. Fifteen miles from home a half-breed lad asked for a ride, and you see, now we were in luck.

When we came to the river, there was a big raft, run by a small gas engine, that they call a ferry in here. It 's too small for its purpose, but we crossed on it, team and all, and continued on our way. Every human being within a radius of two hundred miles was there. On one side of the field were the few whites. On the other side were the Indians in their tepees. There was quite an encampment of them and consisted of three tribes — the Cree, Bear, and Slave.

On the frontier all social barriers are down and everybody is friendly. I walked around quite a while with an old lady who has lived in here several years. She was just putting me wise. "You see," said she, "there is a great deal of disease in here on account of loose living among the Indians and breeds since the white man came into this country. Nearly all of them just have a blanket marriage and there are so few in here that they 'd marry their own sisters if they dared, for the priest." "What 's a blanket marriage?" said I. "Oh, a lad sees a girl he wants, and he takes his blanket to her tent, and they 're married as long as he leaves it there." "Well, well," said I, "that 's just what the youngsters Outside are fussing about right now,

according to *McCall's*. 'Trial marriage' is what they call it."

When it came to running, the white children were way ahead of the Indian and breed children, but in the high-jumping contests the Indians won. The prizes were two dollars for the first and a dollar for the second. This was in the children's races, although in the horse racing prizes went as high as fifty dollars. Only Indians and breeds tried the horse races, but they were very exciting. There must have been around thirty ponies in one race only.

Boy had the time of his life. The great day was here, and all and more than he had anticipated. A picnic, a horse race, and Indians, all at once.

The races kept up till six o'clock and after that there was an Indian dance that is very popular. It is called the "Lame Dance," and sometimes the "Give-away Dance." They just jump up and down around a fire to the beat of drums. It is odd, because they give away nearly everything they have. A man with a nice pair of fancy moccasins will hold them out to another Indian, who grabs hold of them, and then they dance awhile together. The second

Indian gives the other man something, probably a hat or a pair of gayly embroidered gloves of deerskin. Away they go again. The whole tribe soon get to dancing in the flickering glow of the fires.

A big present calls for a big present in return, of course. Some of them are canny and are much better off the next morning. They 'll give away their horses, dogs, and sleds, and most anything, even to their blankets, and they are very precious to the Indian hearts when cold weather comes.

When the present is big they make believe it is the kerchief they are holding or a twig or anything they happen to have. They keep this up all night long. Sometimes white man's fire water helps to keep it lively. As it began to look kind of rough, we left early.

One of the lonesome sisterhood had a bottle with just a wee bit of cold cream and I had some powder. After such a long day we thought we 'd better fix up a little, as we felt hot and sunburned. So we went down the bank and washed in the river and then used up the cold cream and powder and felt so much better and real civilized. It does n't take much to make women happy and contented even if

they are on the banks of a lonely river, two thousand miles away.

It took us about an hour to get to the Fort, where the few whites and the breeds had an all-night dance in the old Diamond P. Building. The five white girls in here did not lack for partners. The breed girls have a dashing beauty, and maybe because I was a wee bit homesick I thought the white girls were sweeter and prettier.

The old-fashioned dances are danced in here. Until three years ago the only dance known was the square dance. Then a new teacher at the Fort taught them to waltz and fox-trot, but the square dance is the favorite and danced about three times to one of the others.

Light was furnished by two lanterns hung in the ceiling, and we sat on a wooden bench running around the wall. It was n't crowded, for the hall (or rather old store) was very large and everybody had a good time. There were about thirty-two couples on the floor at once. Of course the break-down was the liveliest, and as they warmed up they yelled and whooped her up in good shape. The young people in here have lots of pep.

The fiddler was a vigorous old white man in

the seventies. He had twinkling eyes and a long white beard, and white hair falling down to his shoulders. Dressed like a trapper, he looked quite like old Rip Van Winkle come to life, while the red kerchief round his neck made him quite in keeping with the crowd he was playing for.

Twelve o'clock we all lunched on tea, sandwiches, and cake. The old fiddler came over and sat down beside me. Said he, "You 're from the States, I hear. So am I. What part did you come from?" "I was born in Illinois," said I. "Born in Illinois? Why, so was I," he answered. "I 've played Uncle Tom in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' all over the States and 'Ten Nights in a Barroom' and many others. I was clown in a circus for many years, too. But I always wanted a home and a piece of land. I drifted in here about six years ago and homesteaded as pretty a piece of land by the river as I 've ever seen. My cabin is only a dugout with a log front, but it 's a home at last."

He seemed so glad to see me, and I felt the same way about him, for he was born under the same flag as I was. When the dancing started again they waltzed to the tune of "Darling Nellie Gray" and "Home, Sweet Home." He

did n't say anything nor even look in my direction, and bent to his playing, but I knew he was playing for two homesick hearts.

The repeated tunes soon took effect and everybody began singing or whistling very softly "Nellie Gray." As they danced under the swaying lanterns, I think each dusky swain felt that he had a darling Nellie Gray in his arms and nobody was going to take her away. The last waltz was "Home, Sweet Home," and morning had come, and the tired but happy dancers went home.

Boy and I got into our buggy and drove about twelve miles further down the river, and bought four small pigs of an American homesteader who is living there alone with a small son. The mother of the child is dead. The winter is so long and cold that we seem to crave fat, feel starved for it. There will be quite a lot of vegetables in my garden and a little piece of barley is coming on so good that I think I 'll be able to fatten two pigs and keep one pair over. Poor Barney will have to bark alone for a while yet. It was good of you folks to think of him. Boy told him all about it. Anyway there are no dogs in here that Boy wants just yet. He wants a bird dog to go hunting chickens and

ducks. One that will swim after the duck. All the dogs here are large, fit only for sled dogs and very expensive. Boy is too young to have a dog train. He 'd go too far, get lost, or meet wolves.

The Indians shoot ducks all summer, but Boy and I don't in July. The last time we went hunting Boy shot four, but could only bring home three of them. One was a big mallard, one a spoonbill, and one an Indian duck. The fourth one was a mallard and we left it floating on a slough too deep to wade. Boy mourned for that duck all the way home. He 'd have gone after it, but there was quicksand in the bottom and it seemed too risky.

July 14, 1927

It 's meltingly hot and very showery and no breeze, and my garden is just wonderful, even though planted a month late. I put it all in on one day, on June 2, and more rutabagas on June 27, and beans June 29. Radishes and lettuce I sow every week since June 2. The peas are in bloom. Some earlier beans are budded, and tomatoes and cucumbers that were started in the house are in bud. Is n't it wonderful to see things grow?

And I have forty-eight cabbages once more, looking fine. Also some cauliflower and a few 'potatoes. Four sunflowers and a dozen sweet peas are my flower garden. The potatoes are very late and will just grow in hope. If the frost will be late, too, we 'll all be happy.

Boy and I went to the woods a mile away with one horse and we took turns chopping a small dry tree. Then the horse dragged it home in the snow. It took a tree a day. After Christmas Daddy felt stronger and began to help with the chores. Every day we three did the chores together and then I read to them until bedtime or played with Boy.

The cold in here is like taking a bath in liquid air. You go out in it and it feels as if you had nothing on and were just standing in icy air. When it was 60 below zero I would sometimes take off my mitten and run my hand over my coat just to feel the surprising cold caught in the cloth. In the tent it was almost unendurable. I hung a blanket up to keep back the icy chill of the canvas that froze you on one side even when the stove was red-hot. Boy is wonderful. He needs to be in here. I would n't have him on the Outside now if I could. Early

responsibilities never hurt a man. His education is not being neglected either, for he is taking a correspondence course that the state furnishes free to isolated children.

I have received more letters lately than at first. If I lived Outside and met these people and they talked like that, I 'm afraid a washtub would n't make me a hat. But in here I just say, "what a kind letter," and go out and hoe the beans. The letters make my heart glad, but the struggle is always here, day after day, to try to get ready for the winter.

It was just like you and very thoughtful to send me that little compass. You see, if you 're lost in here you must make for the river. As a rule, one has a general idea about where the river is, if one could keep going in the right direction and not get confused in the bush. I climb a tree when I 'm out to get the lay of the land. The bush surrounds you wherever you go and it 's higher than a man's head. Barney always goes with us and seems to have a nose for home. I tell you, we value that dog.

July 15. — It beats all how that garden grows. There are flowers on the tomatoes and cucumbers, and as there are no bees I will have

to pollinate them by picking one blossom and rubbing it face to face on another one.

The wild strawberries are nearly gone and the saskatoons coming on fast. The strawberries were nice, but hard to pick in the long grass, so I 'll put up more saskatoons to make up for them. I brought all my jars with me ("bottles" they call them in here) and shall try to fill them all with something.

July 17. — The weather here is still wonderful and showery, and my garden humping right along. I have four small pigs now and two month-old kittens. It does n't seem so lonesome now that I hear grunts and meows. Am over my head with work. We 're making a fence and digging a well and are going to start haying soon. We 're all alone but happy.

August 22

I studied Canada and found the coast climate is damp, wet, and chilly all winter. Here it is dry, the snow like fine sugar for eight months. It 's cold, but bearable with proper clothing. I can keep Daddy alive many years in this climate for there 's no rheumatism here and no chance for him to get wet. What I figured on

was trapping for a living, but I shall farm. All we need to eat that will grow, and I think, in a year or two, I will be able to. At least it won't be for lack of trying.

The cabin is 18 × 30 and I have 87 square feet of space to walk, not in one piece, but around the stoves, making aisles. We eat, sleep, cook, and walk in it. The roof has one thickness of tar paper on it and I want to put on another layer before winter. It leaks. It has no chimneys and the two stovepipes go straight up. I face the southeast.

I have Grandma Rose's old cook stove that she used fifty years and I sixteen. It 's in fair shape and bakes bread yet. I have no barns yet, so I shall keep the horses in a hay barn. Pioneering is hard when you 're not stout. If I had known the fur was gone I would n't have come this far, but I believe Providence sends us where He wants us to go and there may be work for me to do here.

The garden is growing fine and we are all well and very busy. Haying next week. All alone, happy too in a way, not so lonesome as last year.

I don't feel so alone any more. This winter won't seem so cold now.

THE NEW HOMESTEAD

[To the Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*.]

August 27, 1927

Have just received your good letter and check. We will get through the coming winter in good shape. The check finished up what was still needed for the grubstake. That means food ahead for one year. I wish everybody in the world could say the same.

I counted the years that are left if I live to be seventy, and find there are twenty-two. I wonder how many hopes will come true in these precious years. Daddy reached the Promised Land — that dream came true. Brain food so as not to grow bitter — the pile of books in the corner of the cabin. Friends — a box full of letters to read over this winter.

Daddy's favorite song used to be "There 's a long, long trail awinding to the land of my dreams." Here is the song he sings now to the tune of "Where the River Shannon Flows":

There 's a river that is flowing
Up to the northern sea.
'T is not famed in song nor story,
But it has a charm for me.
It has brought me from the South-land
Where the Starry Banner blows.
And I 've settled down forever
Where the great Peace River flows.

I 've a little moss-chinked cabin
Just by the northern shore,
Where I hope to live contented
Till the span of life is o'er.
May life's cares pass lightly o'er me,
Its troubles and its woes
Be to me a fleeting shadow,
Where the great Peace River flows.

How contented and happy he is. It 's no wonder. Every seed he puts in the ground grows. It may be a long time before you get this letter. May I send a Christmas message to your readers ?

If you leave the concrete highways
And go in the lanes and byways,
You 'll find many Hilda Roses
Digging spuds and picking posies.

Thank you for your kind wishes and sympathy, and of the folks in the office. It gives me a happy feeling, and the winter won't seem so cold nor long.

September 1, 1927

Dear me, how dreadful to get a card and no news! I 'm so busy I don't know what I 'm doing. Just now hauling in hay and getting ready to hole up for the winter. The check from the *Atlantic* came last mail and went right

back to the Outside, for I met the mail myself, a three-day journey. It came in the nick of time and took off a big load of worry. It bought a bottle of liniment, some salve and things I had to have, and the rest in "grub" (pardon the term, but they all use it in here).

Leaves of Grass came. Been wanting it for years. When everything is read over and over and it 's 60 or so below zero, and no one to talk to, Daddy and I get out the Bible and Bobby Burns. Now we 'll have *Leaves of Grass*, and many things we 'll find there to think about.

The three small books arrived also, and the compass. Daddy laughs at the way I use the compass. It made me very brave, and I start off with the compass in my hand, walking in one direction till I find some berries in the bush. Terrible bush fires have made so much smoke we have n't seen the sun lately. When the pail is full of berries I walk home with the compass in my hand in the opposite direction from which I came, and arrive in sight of the cabin every time. But I watch the compass very carefully. Is that the way to use a compass? If I were lost and looked at the compass, I would n't know the way home unless I could locate the river. You have no idea how jumbled up this

country appears. Muskegs, lakes, ridges, and bush, helter skelter.

Boy will ride to Fort Vermilion with this letter to-morrow. It will be his first trip alone and will take three days. Quite an adventure for a ten year-old, but one must learn to be brave. Bears are very numerous this year and I hope he won't meet any to frighten his pony. We have become quite used to bear meat. It resembles pork, and the fat is like lard. Of course pork is better, but when you 're real hungry it 's pretty good eating.

This letter is part of my diary, so keep it. Some I send to Mrs. Austin and Mrs. White, and an old man who writes me real cheerful letters wanted one, and I wrote all about one day Boy and I spent at the Fort in July.

The *Youth's Companion* has n't come yet, but may be in the next mail. Boy will write when he gets it. My garden was good and a great help. Next year it will be better, for I am learning conditions. Daddy is happy and we are all well.

Sept. 5

It 's not such a bad climate, and much better than farther south. Daddy prefers it to northern Minnesota and Dakota as they get so much

north wind there. It gets cold, but it's a still cold. Forty degrees below and a wind is worse than 78 degrees and no wind. We are sheltered in three ways. That 's why I went so far to get into the "pocket," as I call it. The Arctic winds hit the Caribou Mountains, rise, and pass over us to burst in all their fury on Calgary and Edmonton farther south, and continue on to Chicago, over vast stretches of land. My cabin nestles against a small hill on the north side and across the river is a cliff along the whole river over 300 feet high. On our side it is low. We are in a north river bend. The cliff keeps off cold air in the summer and the river keeps away the frost. This is the only homestead I know of that has n't had frost yet and I am canning beans that I planted in July. Just took a chance. You see by going far enough we had a better choice of a homestead and got what we wanted. A frost-free garden means a great deal. I was disappointed not to find fur to trap but the Atlantic checks have bought food for a whole year ahead.

I read the book, *So Big*, and found it interesting, and it worried me too. I have dreamed about College so much and it would break my heart to be an Outsider. I did n't realize how

snobbish students can be. I toil, my hands are calloused and hard, but that 's only on the outside and a good manicure will soon fix that. Must I always wear overalls, will playtime never come to a little tired girl? Won't they play with me then?

Daddy pined for Canada and has never lived in a city. There are thousands who have greater hardships than I and get through finally. I always feel that it might be worse.

I think we 'll have better mail service this year. Last year the breed who brings our mail from the Outside got careless and missed going several times. Someone complained, and he was fined $500, and he says he 's going to tend to business this year. Anyhow he 's coming till the ice runs in the river, in a canoe with a motor and a small barge that he pushes in front of the canoe with the mail on it. He has been ordered to cut a good winter road for horses through, and bring us mail once a month except in November and April. The ice is n't safe then. A winter road crosses creeks, lakes, and muskegs on the ice.

Boy is going to ride all alone to the Fort to mail this letter and bring home the mail. It will be quite a trip, three days, for the little

fellow. But he is getting braver all the time and offered to go himself. . . .

My garden was very good and Daddy is so happy here. Boy is getting so dependable, and until he gets older I can teach him all right.

Think, I have food ahead, very simple of course, but good for a whole year. How many can say that in the big cities to which the farmers have gone these last years? You 'll find that there will be a growing discontent in the cities from these very farmers. Not used to city life they 'll grow bitter. I love the city and some day will come back. I love flowers and gardens and birds but a village life near a big city would just suit me. A trip to the city to hear a great singer or to go shopping now. Dreams. Some day they 'll come true. I often sing: —

> "If you can do without the dust of doing,
> If you can keep your mind and body fine."

September 14, 1927

Boy and I saw a squaw fix up her baby in a moss basket as they are called in here. The foundation is a board a little longer than the baby. The board is very smooth and smaller

at each end. The top end has a hole to put a rawhide thong through to hang it by. On both sides are holes to lace it up after the baby is in it. The squaw, a full-blooded Indian, laid the board on the ground in the teepee and took some moss out of a big sack. The moss is soft and woolly, like cotton, and clean. It grows in the muskegs.

She spread a layer of the moss four to six inches thick very evenly on the board. Then she placed her little newborn naked baby boy on it and put another layer of moss on up to his armpits. Next she laid a piece of a Hudson Bay four-point blanket over him and tucked it in good so it covered him up entirely, little arms and shoulders too. There were two long rawhide strings at the bottom and now she laced it up good and tight, the strings crossing like a boy laces his shoes. That's what the holes on the sides of the board were for.

The fire was in the center of the teepee, the smoke going up through the hole in the top. A little to one side, so the cradle would clear the smoke, she hung her baby to a thong of moose hide dangling from one of the teepee poles. The baby crooned softly and seemed happy as it swung to and fro. Every morning

and every night the squaw cleans her baby. She hunts in the muskegs for the softest moss and keeps a good supply on hand.

October 4, 1927

I am two miles on the other side of the Fort, staying overnight and looking at the mail. I shall make a mighty effort to get the photos, but may fail, as there are thirty-two miles of wildness to them and the mail leaves to-morrow at 10 A.M. Can't express myself in regard to it. I never dreamed of it ever. Not to worry any more when the cold comes nor about frosts in the garden! My heart beats fast.

October 5, 1927

A strange bed and the good news kept me awake until nearly morning. Then I slept hard until Grandma Letts called for breakfast. She is not very old, but so good to us that Boy calls her grandma and she likes it.

Last night I kept thinking about you and the good old editor. At first I thought he was a young man, but now I believe he must be old, for age makes folks kindly and loving. And it 's going to be a book. What color will the cover be? And some day I will hold it in my

hand, and Daddy will be happy forever and ever.

The little photos are at home thirty-two miles away. The only way to get them is to ask the mail boat to take me on the river to Prairie Point. Then I 'll run home (it 's nearly two miles), get the pictures, jump on a horse, and ride back. The mail leaves now in a couple of hours and won't be back for two weeks. That will be the last mail we 'll get until the Christmas mail.

The garden yielded so well that my little cellar hole is full and looks so good. The cabbage is right on top in a nice green row, and a big packing crate has shelves to hold my canned fruit and pickles. Lots of hard work and time went into that crate, for it 's wild fruit, most of it, hunted up and gathered far from home and along the river.

This is going to be a great country for settlers some day. Everything loves to grow here. Even the potato peelings I threw out on the ground grew and made potatoes. I have some little pigs now to eat the peelings and grow fat. No more now I guess. To catch the mails now I must hurry and dress up warm, for it is cold on the great river these days.

October 16

Tuesday I go to the Fort to mail my letters and get the last mail this year. The mail is so heavy for the north that a winter road is being cut and horses and sleds will be used. The road was started last year and will be finished for the first mail.

The Bonny Lassie came out in the last boat. She is the dearest girl.

Now that you 've seen Daddy's pictures I 'm sure you don't blame me for loving him and taking care of him. Boy is like him so I 'll have Daddy from the cradle to the grave.

Post Office. *October* 19. — P. S. Great news. They 're opening up this country for settlers. A Land Office substation is now open and beginning with next summer a steady and adequate boat service is guaranteed. Very seductive rates are offered on settlers' effects and a very low rate on farm produce and grain to be shipped out of the country. The settlers are getting together and are going to join the wheat pool.

A government road is going to be built from Peace River in here and we have promise of a semi-monthly mail service throughout the year as soon as this road is ready.

The Department of Agriculture is going to help us to clean out weeds.

Is n't this grand news? Now I 'm not afraid any more. It puts new life into me. I 'm going home to Daddy now to tell him the glad tidings.

DATE DUE

MAR 19 1994

MAR 18 1994

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